

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ALMSHOUSE RESIDENTS



1. GENERAL

- (a) These guidelines have been prepared to inform applicants about the process of appointment of residents to its almshouses in the city of Winchester. We talk in terms of appointment because almshouse residents are not tenants as such, but beneficiaries of the Charity. Residents are 'licensees' in law but no resident can be required to vacate an almshouse save in accordance with the terms of the licence and following a court order.
- (b) The Charity is registered and governed by the Charity Commission and must adhere to the rules of its Charitable Scheme, as approved and directed by the Charity Commission. A copy of the Scheme is available on request.

2. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

- (a) The Charity provides independent living accommodation for people over the age of 60 who can demonstrate a financial and other need (see below) for requiring accommodation at St John's Winchester, and can show a willingness and commitment to contribute to the life of the St John's community.
- (b) You may apply to St John's Winchester if you are resident in the City of Winchester (meaning the local government electoral district of the City of Winchester), or resident in Hampshire (outside the City of Winchester) or you are resident outside Hampshire, but have a close relative living in the City of Winchester who will visit you and generally support you in independent living. The Charity will give a preference to applicants who are resident in the City of Winchester.
- (c) The almshouses comprise 25 flats at St John's North, The Broadway, 26 flats at St John's South, The Broadway, 25 flats at St Mary Magdalen, Colebrook Street and 5 flats at Christes Hospital in Symonds Street. Some of our South Side almshouses are benefiting from recent adaptations and we are hoping to adapt more. We seek to match the resident with appropriate accommodation, where possible.
- (d) The appointment of all residents is entirely at the discretion of the Chief Executive and Trustees of the Charity. In assessing applications received, the Charity will consider, amongst other things, financial need, housing need, immediate care needs and social need. Some of the issues which we will consider are set out below (although this list is not exhaustive):-
 - (i) **Financial Need:** The accommodation provided for residents attracts a significant subsidy. Every applicant is required to disclose in their application all financial assets and types of income, e.g. Bank and/or Building Society accounts, Investment income, Deeds of Gifts, Government Benefits, and Work Pensions etc. they are in receipt of. If an applicant has previously gifted a property or significant sum of money in the past 10 years, it is unlikely they would be considered eligible for accommodation, nor if the applicant currently owns his or her own property, even in the unlikely event it is worth less than £30,000 (see below).

Only those applicants whose total capital assets have a value of less than £30,000 or whose income is at a level which would mean they would normally qualify for housing benefit will be considered unless the applicant has very significant social or other needs. In any event the Charity must be satisfied that its Scheme is being complied with.

(ii) **Housing Need**: Consideration is given to an applicant's current circumstances such as homelessness or inappropriate housing for their current health/wellbeing needs.

(iii) **Care and Support**: Details of an applicant's current health needs are outlined in the application form and a medical questionnaire is completed by the applicant's General Practitioner. Our Registered Manager evaluates the information provided to ensure that the almshouse welfare team are able to provide the care and support required. There may be a need for the Registered Manager to review your assessment if 3 months has elapsed between submission of the information and your assessment.

(iv) **Social Need**: St John's Winchester prides itself on its strong community. Many residents benefit from the social cohesion of our community. The residents and Charity organise many activities and there are also various social clubs in which residents are most welcome to participate should they so wish.

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

- (a) The Charity's almshouses comprise one-bedroom flats for the most part. The majority of the flats are only suitable for a single person. There are a few flats which are suitable for a couple. 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 some small houses which have a staircase which cannot accommodate a stair lift. All other accommodation is self-contained on one level although stairs have to be negotiated to gain access to some first-floor flats on all of the sites, save for the South Side.

This means ground floor flats are very much sought after by applicants. We would advise you that when they become available a preference for ground floor flats is given to our existing residents in first floor flats whose medical requirements necessitate a move.

- (c) There is a Community Room at St Mary Magdalen where regular social groups and lunch clubs are held. A visiting hairdresser also provides a weekly hairdressing service.
- (d) The Chapel plays a very important role in our community. It is situated in the Broadway with regular services taken by our Chaplain. Chapel Services are attended by residents, volunteers, current and former staff and Winchester residents. Our Chapel provides comfort, companionship, spiritual guidance and solace. However, there is no religious affiliation required of any resident, and we welcome those of all faiths or none.
- (e) The Charity employs a Registered Manager, Deputy Manager and a welfare care team. The welfare team provide assistance to a resident in an emergency, or in cases of short-term sickness or temporary incapacity. The Charity also has volunteers to assist residents with shopping if they are unable to get to the shops due to ill health. Our Community Support Worker who drives our mini-bus, supports resident

events/clubs and befriends residents. She also provides assistance in seeking benefits such as rent and Attendance allowance.

Our Registered Manager can advise residents and their relatives about independent care packages which may be available to help a resident remain in their almshouse should they become less able to cope.

- (f) Although support offered by the welfare team is unique to the Charity, and not found in other local housing providers for the older person, they do not provide regular nursing or personal care. New residents have to be in sufficiently good health when they enter the almshouses to be able to lead independent lives.
- (g) Many family members of our almshouse residents take an active role in the support of their relative. They will be contacted by our Registered Manager if care needs become more acute to assist in decision making. 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.
- (h) All St John's almshouses are linked to a Tunstall Telecom emergency call system, and there is 24-hour emergency cover provided by our Welfare Team.
- (i) All the almshouses are centrally heated and the majority are also supplied with hot water from a central boiler (the exception being some of the almshouses on the North Side where water is heated by immersion heater). The residents pay a weekly maintenance contribution towards their accommodation and repairs and a contribution towards the cost of heating. These costs are reviewed annually by the Charity's Board.
- (j) Given the communal nature of the accommodation, the Charity has made a rule that no pets are allowed in the almshouses.

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) The personal data supplied on your application form will be held on file. Some details may need to be checked with you, but none will be disclosed for any inappropriate purpose and we will follow the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (as amended), and the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations from May 2018.
- (c) The Charity does 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 short list 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 Charity will be able to offer an applicant an almshouse.
- (d) Applicants are asked to give the name of two people who know the applicant well and could supply a reference. With the applicant's permission an approach is made to their GP to provide a medical report for assessment by our Almshouse Matron.
- (e) No appointment to an almshouse will be made without the members of our Almshouse Panel (comprising trustees and staff) having had the opportunity of meeting the applicant personally and providing the applicant a forum in which to ask questions

about the community. It should be emphasised that an invitation to attend for a discussion does not mean that accommodation will be offered. The format of the Almshouse Panel is that the applicant will be invited to discuss their application in more detail to understand their needs, and assess whether St John's Winchester can meet their requirements as well as whether the applicant is likely to fit in with St John's community. Equally, the applicant needs to make a judgment that our community is right for them.

- (f) If offered accommodation, the applicant will be invited to inspect the accommodation. If the applicant refuses the flat, it is highly unlikely that an alternative will be offered, and the applicant's name is likely to be removed from the list of eligible applicants.
- (g) The Charity does not offer a transfer to alternative accommodation, once a resident is in situ, unless the Registered Manager can confirm there are medical needs to support the move.
- (h) The Charity operates an Equality and Diversity Policy, and all applications will be considered equally and fairly regardless of marital or partnership status, age, disability, race, religion and belief, gender or sexual orientation. A full copy of the policy is available on request.
- (i) The Charity will communicate the Panel's decision to applicants as swiftly as possible. If the application is unsuccessful, the applicant can appeal against the decision, or, In the event that an applicant has a formal complaint about the handling of his or her application, this should be lodged with the Chief Executive. Both an appeal and a complaint will be considered by a panel of Trustees convened by the Chair of the Trustees. If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the adjudication of the Panel, 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 Chief Executive.
- (j) These guidelines seek to be as comprehensive as possible but if you have any queries arising you should contact the Charity's Chief Executive at 32 St John's South, The Broadway, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 9LN (Tel: 01962-854226).

[Reviewed April 2020]