

Since 1618

HAMMERSMITH UNITED CHARITIES

Residents' Handbook

Everything you need to know about your home

SYCAMORE HOUSE
JOHN BETTS HOUSE

Since 1618
HAMMERSMITH UNITED CHARITIES

What's inside your Handbook?

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Welcome
to your home
at John Betts House or Sycamore House.

This handbook includes useful information about your home and Hammersmith United Charities, the charity that owns the almshouses. It also sets out your responsibilities as a resident. These responsibilities supplement the rules and regulations explained in your letter of appointment, which you signed when you accepted your appointment.

Our aim is for everyone to be able to live safely and independently in a friendly and supportive community. The information contained in this handbook is designed to support this aim.

Please do take the time to read the handbook and speak to your Scheme Manager if you need any further information.

I hope you enjoy living here and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Victoria

VICTORIA HILL
Chief Executive and Clerk to the Trustees



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Useful addresses and telephone numbers

HAMMERSMITH UNITED CHARITIES CONTACTS

Head of Housing and Property
Based at John Betts House
Office: 020 8600 0651
Mobile 07470 793565
Working days: Monday – Thursday

Gardening Team
Email: gardeningteam@hamunitedcharities.com
Working days: Monday – Friday

Finance Team
Based at Sycamore House
Email: finance@hamunitedcharities.com
Phone: 0208 600 0656
Working days: Monday – Friday

Chief Executive Officer
Based at Sycamore House
Phone: 07393 746 691
Working days: Monday – Friday

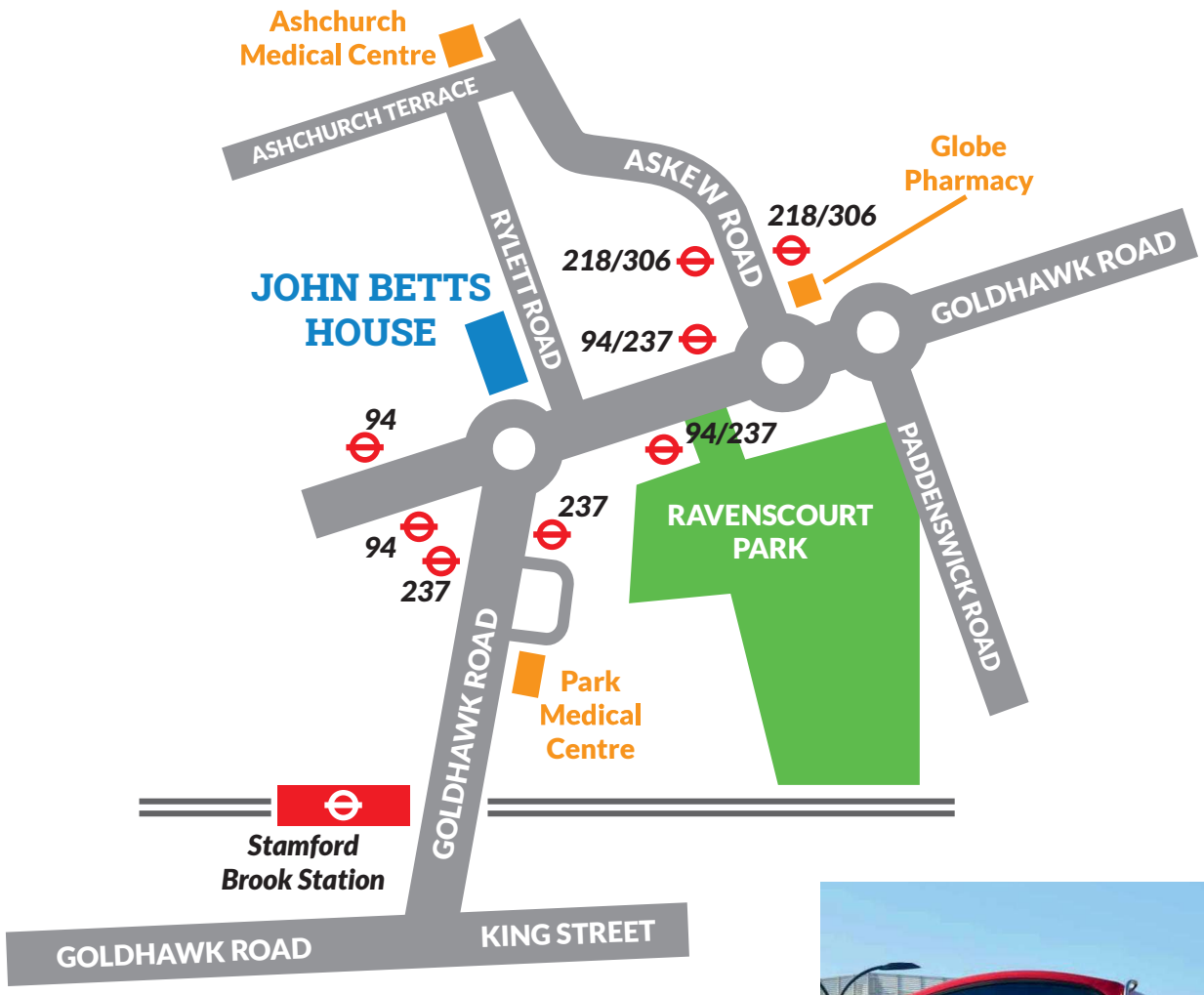
JOHN BETTS HOUSE

Rylett Road, London, W12 9NJ

Scheme Manager
Office: 020 8600 0657
Mobile: 07789 058 861

Working days: Monday – Friday





Buses

Four bus routes pass nearby:

- ***94 Acton Green – Piccadilly Circus***
- ***237 Hounslow – White City***
- ***218 North Action Station – Hammersmith Bus Station***
- ***306 Second Avenue to Sands End, Sainsbury's***



Tube

Stamford Brook **District Line**

Parking

Visitor parking is available in the side roads

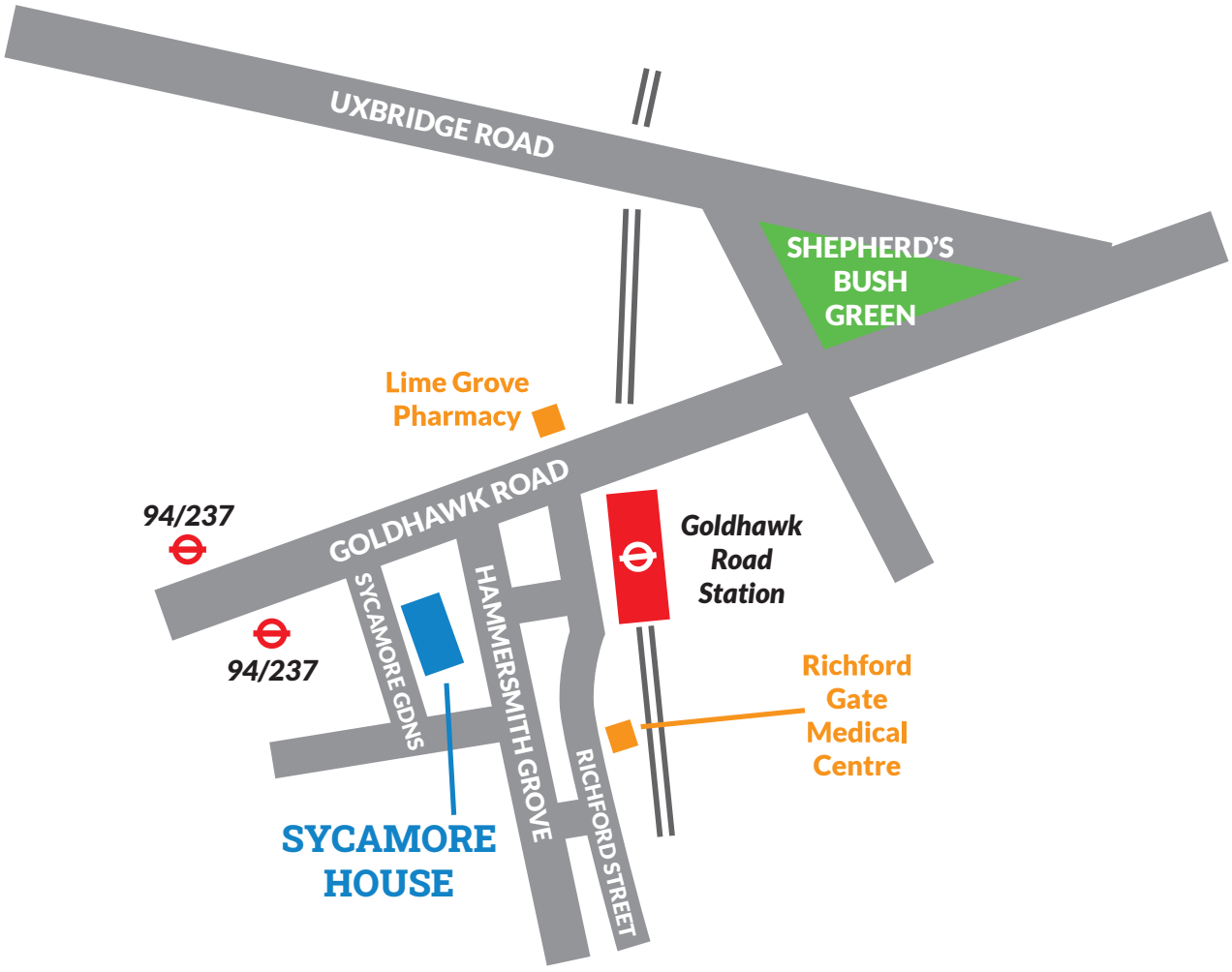
SYCAMORE HOUSE

Sycamore Gardens, London, W6 0AS

Scheme Manager
Office: 020 8600 0650
Mobile: 07733 842 574

Working days: Monday – Friday





Buses

Two bus routes run along Goldhawk Road:

- **94 Acton Green – Piccadilly Circus**
- **237 Hounslow – White City**

These bus routes pass near Shepherd's Bush Green:
C1, 31, 49, 72, 94, 95, 148, 207, 220, 228, 237, 260, 272, 283, 295, 316, N72, N207

Tube

Goldhawk Road
Circle Line
Hammersmith & City Line

Parking

Visitor parking is available in the side roads

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Emergency services

Fire / Ambulance / Police: 999
Other medical advice: 111
Police non-emergencies: 101

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Council
Town Hall, King Street, London, W6 9JU

General enquiries: 020 8748 3020
Housing Benefit Office: **020 8753 6681**
Council Tax: **020 8753 6681**
Universal Credit: **020 8753 1587**

Community organisations

Citizens Advice
Avonmore Library & Neighbourhood Centre,
7 North End Crescent, London, W14 8TG
Telephone: 0808 278 7832

Age UK
105 Greyhound Road, London, W6 8NJ
Telephone: 020 7386 9085

Hospitals

Charing Cross
Fulham Palace Road, W6 8RF
Telephone: 020 3311 1234

Hammersmith
Du Cane Road, W12 0HS
Telephone: 020 3313 1000

Local GP surgeries

Park Medical Centre
Invermead Close, W6 0QG
Telephone: 020 8741 7471

Richford Gate Medical Centre
Richford Street, W6 7HY
Telephone: 020 3005 2309

Ashchurch Medical Centre
134 Askew Road, W12 9BP
Telephone: 020 8735 3550

Make a note of any other useful numbers you may need here:

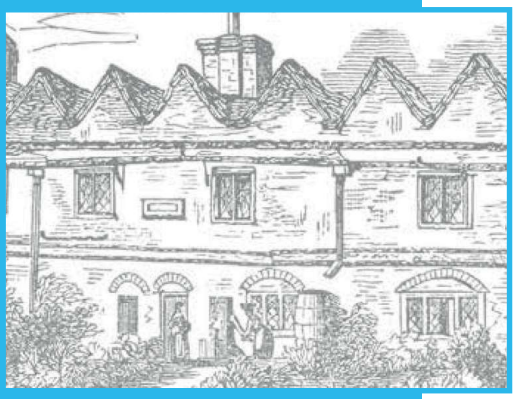
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About Hammersmith United Charities

Hammersmith United Charities is the charity that owns John Betts House and Sycamore House. The Charity is a non-profit making organisation with two main activities – almshouses for people aged 60 and over and grants to local organisations that help people in need in Hammersmith. This section contains more information about Hammersmith United Charities and its history.

HISTORY

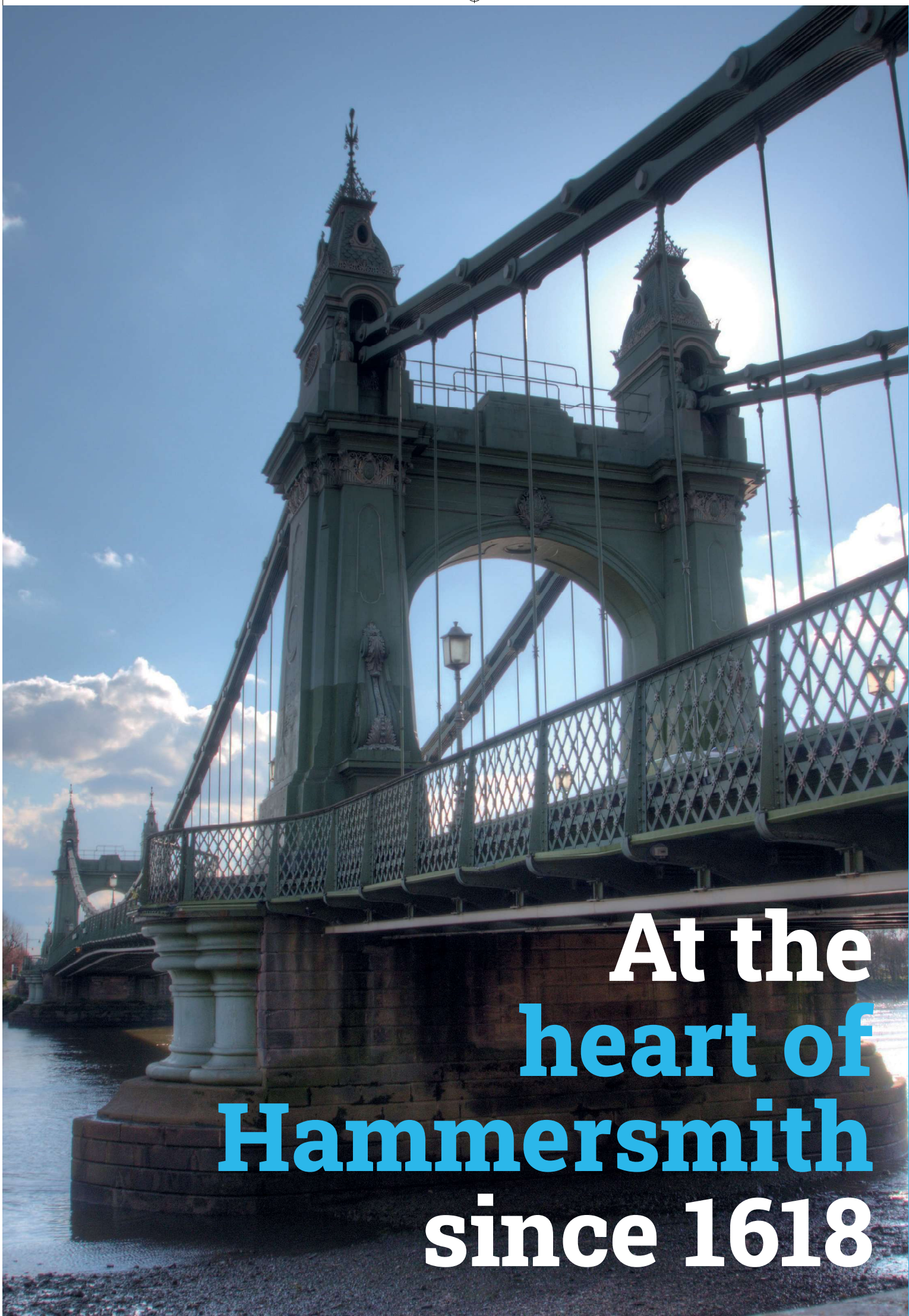
Hammersmith United Charities brings together several ancient charities (the oldest of which was founded in 1618), all of which were established by citizens of Hammersmith for those in need in the local area.



Our first almshouse was built in 1634 by Dr Thomas Iles. Hunger and homelessness were common in Hammersmith back then, and working families often struggled to survive. One by one, concerned citizens stepped forward to help. They left bequests to buy land to build homes and to provide "bread, beef and money" for those in need.



400 years later, the people of Hammersmith still face many challenges; but thanks to the foresight and generosity of our founders, Hammersmith United Charities is still working hard to support our community.



At the heart of Hammersmith since 1618

THE ALMSHOUSES



John Betts House

John Betts House was built in 1964, and a third floor was added in 1998. There are 40 flats at John Betts House.



Sycamore House

Sycamore House was built in the 1950s, with a new, fully accessible addition built in 2011. There are 52 flats at Sycamore House.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Hammersmith United Charities looks after 18 legacies, 13 of which were left to us to relieve poverty in the local area. We use the money from these legacies to make small grants to local community organisations and charities that support people in Hammersmith. These grants help to fund a wide range of activities for all ages and all sections of the community, such as youth groups, organisations providing advice on money matters and legal issues, as well as those tackling loneliness and isolation.





GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION

Hammersmith United Charities is governed by a board of up to 16 voluntary Trustees, who have a legal responsibility for all aspects of the Charity's operation. Trustees meet four times a year. There are also several sub-committees, who deal with housing, grants, finance and governance. Photographs and biographies of our Trustees can be found on our website at **hamunitedcharities.org.uk**

The Charity is regulated by the Charity Commission (Registered charity number 205856) and the Regulator of Social Housing.

GIFTS AND LEGACIES

The Charity has been able to build and maintain the almshouses thanks to personal bequests and donations made over the last 400 years. If you or a family member or friend wish to make a donation, please speak to the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Trustees. Your donation will be treated as confidential. Please note, staff and trustees cannot accept a personal legacy or gift from a resident.

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Terms of occupancy

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT

Before you move in, you will be given a Letter of Appointment to sign. This sets out the terms on which you occupy your almshouse flat.

Almshouse residents are beneficiaries of the Charity and occupy their homes under a Letter of Appointment rather than a tenancy. This means that you do not have the same legal rights as a tenant. However, you can expect to remain in your home for as long as you continue to meet the conditions of your appointment.

Your appointment may be brought to an end in certain circumstances. These include if:

- **you are no longer able to live independently and need a level of care that cannot safely be provided in your home;**
- **your financial circumstances change significantly and you are able to make alternative housing arrangements;**
- **you persistently engage in serious anti-social behaviour towards other residents, staff or others; or**
- **you seriously or persistently breach the terms of your Letter of Appointment or the rules set out in this handbook.**

We will always discuss any concerns with you first and try to resolve problems wherever possible. We will act fairly and reasonably and consider your individual circumstances before making any decision about your appointment.

The Charity may need to update the terms of your Letter of Appointment from time to time. If we propose any changes, we will let you know in advance and give you an opportunity to share your views.



FEES AND BILLS

Weekly maintenance contribution (WMC)

Rather than rent, you will pay a weekly maintenance contribution (WMC), which is paid in advance and collected by standing order or direct debit on the first of each month. This includes a service charge, which is used to maintain communal areas and to provide communal services.

Each year, you will receive a breakdown of the service charge and details of the next year's WMC. In most cases, any increase to the WMC comes into force from 1st April. You will be given one calendar month's notice of any increase.

You may be entitled to benefits to help with the cost of the WMC. You will need to have an email account to submit a benefit claim online. Help to Claim offers free, independent, confidential and impartial support over the phone to help people make a claim to Universal Credit, delivered by trained advisers from Citizens Advice. The telephone number for Help to Claim is 0800 144 8444.

If you are eligible for Housing Benefit, you can ask for it to be paid to you or to Hammersmith United Charities directly.

Please remember that if your circumstances change, it is your responsibility to let the relevant benefit office know.

Personal charges

Heating element

Your home is heated by the communal boilers. We charge a fixed monthly fee for this, which you will pay in advance on the first of each month via standing order or direct debit. We usually only increase the heating charge on 1st April, and you will be given at least one calendar month's notice of any changes.

Water element

Flats that do not have an individual water meter and are supplied via the communal water meter are charged a fixed monthly fee. This is paid in advance on the first of each month.
(Flats in the new building of Sycamore House have individual water meters)

Personal Charges are not eligible for benefits.

Other household outgoings

You are responsible for paying your own electricity bill and you can change supplier if you wish. Your Scheme Manager will show you where our electricity meter is and can read this for you.

Each flat is fitted with a BT telephone point, so you can set up and pay for your own telephone line with whichever provider you choose.

Hammersmith United Charities has a concessionary TV licence. You will make a small contribution towards this licence. This is paid directly to the Charity. The fee is set by the BBC, and you will be notified if there are any changes and told when the licence is due for renewal each year. If you are over 75 and claiming Pension Credit, you may be eligible for a free TV licence so will no longer have to contribute towards the concessionary TV licence.

You are responsible for your other household outgoings such as contents insurance or personal internet connection.

PERSONAL AND LEGAL INFORMATION

Personal information

We keep some of your personal information in order to provide services to you. We keep your personal information securely and only for as long as it is needed, in accordance with our data retention policy and legal obligations. More information about how we use your personal information is available in our Privacy Notice.

Next of kin

Members of staff cannot act as your next of kin, so please make sure that we have details of a friend or relative who can be contacted in an emergency. Ideally, this should be someone who lives locally.

Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney

We strongly recommend that you make a Will and tell your Scheme Manager where it is kept.
We also recommend that you get a Lasting Power of Attorney so that a loved one can manage your affairs if you are not able to, and a Living Will setting out what medical treatments you do and do not want.

The Citizens Advice Bureau can offer advice on Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Citizens Advice
Avonmore Library & Neighbourhood Centre,
7 North End Crescent, London, W14 8TG
Telephone: 0808 278 7832

Age UK
105 Greyhound Road, London, W6 8NJ
Telephone: 020 7386 9085

Crosslight Advice
St Paul's Church, Queen Caroline Street,
Hammersmith, W6 9PJ
Telephone: 0300 373 1180

INSIDE YOUR ALMSHOUSE FLAT

Adaptations/alterations

Most alterations are not allowed. However, there are exceptions – for example, if your occupational therapist recommends mobility aids. Please obtain approval from the Head of Housing and Property before making any alterations.

Fixtures and fittings

Please take care with tasks such as hanging pictures or putting up shelves as the Charity will charge you for the costs of repairing any damage you may cause, e.g. drilling through a water pipe.

Fitted kitchen units and appliances

We will usually supply ovens, hobs and refrigerators, and these will be safety tested every five years. It is your responsibility to make sure that electrical goods that you own (such as a kettle or TV) are safe to use. Please do not remove, replace or add to your fitted kitchen units or appliances.

Décor

You are welcome to redecorate your home in neutral colours or change the flooring, but please speak to the Head of Housing and Property first. We do not allow wallpaper. You will need to pay for any redecorating costs yourself and all works will be inspected by the Head of Housing and Property.

Cleaning

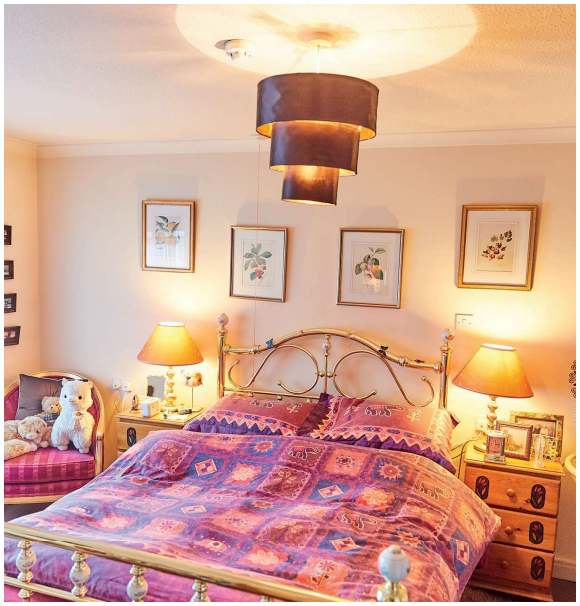
If you are struggling to keep your home clean and tidy, please speak to your Scheme Manager and they will give you details of organisations that might be able to help.

Light bulbs

We can supply light bulbs for sealed light fittings (for example in the bathroom) and fluorescent tube lights. It is your responsibility to provide other light bulbs for your flat.

If a ceiling light blows, the mains switch for the lights will trip, which will turn off other lights and appliances. To turn the overhead lights back on, flick the appropriate mains switch on the consumer unit/circuit breaker box. The Scheme Manager can show you how to do this.





ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

What we mean by anti-social behaviour

Hammersmith United Charities has adopted the definition set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: "conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance." The policy is on our noticeboards.

The table below gives examples of anti-social behaviour:

What may be classed as anti-social behaviour	What is acceptable within a communal environment
Criminal behaviour and/or hate incidents	People talking in their own homes
Intimidation, bullying or verbal abuse	Flushing toilet or shower noise
Persistent noise and rowdy behaviour	Smells from cooking
Inappropriate litter or rubbish disposal or dumping of unused items	Electrical goods noise, such as a TV or radio, in normal hours
Encouraging vermin by feeding birds and wildlife	A one-off party with advance warning

Reporting anti-social behaviour

Please report any concerns as soon as possible by contacting the Head of Housing and Property.

However, if you feel in imminent danger or that your life is being threatened, call the police straight away on 999.

How we will respond

We investigate all complaints of anti-social behaviour and aim to support victims as we gather evidence. We work with the appropriate external agencies, such as the police or social services, as required. We will take the most appropriate, proportionate action if there is a case to answer; this could include:

- Verbal or written warnings.
- Mediation.
- Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs).
- In extreme cases, a resident may be asked to leave their flat.

SEXUAL HARRASMENT

Everyone has the right to feel safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate sexual harassment or other unwanted sexual behaviour towards residents, visitors, staff or contractors.

Sexual harassment can include unwanted sexual comments or jokes, inappropriate touching, sexual gestures, displaying or sharing sexual images, or other unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature.

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, please tell your Scheme Manager, the Head of Housing and Property or another member of staff. We will take reports seriously, consider the safety and support needs of those involved and take appropriate action.

Serious or persistent harassment may be a breach of the terms of occupation and could result in formal action. Where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, we may advise or support you to report it to the police.

COMPLAINTS

We want residents to feel safe and enjoy living in their home and so we take complaints very seriously and try to resolve them as quickly as possible.

You do not need to use the word “complaint”, if you tell us that you are dissatisfied with something we have done, or not done, or with the standard of our service, we will treat the issue as a complaint.

- Write: **Head of Housing and Property at Sycamore House, Sycamore Gardens, London, W6 0AS**
- Email: **officeadmin@hamunitedcharities.com**
- Call: **07470 793 565**
- Speak: **to a member of staff**

Your complaint will be passed to the Head of Housing and Property or the CEO.

Our full complaints policy can be found on noticeboards in the almshouses, and is available on request from your Scheme Manager and on our website: **hamunitedcharities.org.uk**

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice and support about a complaint and can refer a complaint once HUC’s complaints process is exhausted. You can contact the **Housing Ombudsman** online or by calling them on **0300 111 3000**.

OTHER GENERAL RULES

Holidays and other absences

If you are going away, please let your Scheme Manager know as we need to know who is here if there is a fire or other incident.

Almshouse residents are not usually allowed to be absent from their property for more than 28 days in one calendar year as this can affect any Housing Benefit you might receive. We also need to make sure that our flats are used by people in genuine housing need. There are exceptions, such as medical emergencies, which we will be happy to discuss with you.

Working from home

If you plan to work from your home, please speak to the Head of Housing and Property first so we can check this will not be disruptive for other residents.

Moving to another home

If you decide to move out, please give four weeks' notice in writing to the Head of Housing and Property. You will be responsible for your WMC, heating charge, utility bills and other household expenses up to the end of the four weeks or the day you move out, whichever is the latest. By 'move out,' we mean you have left the flat with all your possessions and any rubbish, returned the keys and had your flat inspected by the Scheme Manager.

Transferring to another of our flats

If you are transferring to another flat in one of our almshouses, it is your responsibility to move your furniture and possessions. Your Scheme Manager can give you contact details for local removal companies.

If you do not clear your flat completely and dispose of any unwanted items appropriately, you may be charged for the costs we incur to do this on your behalf.



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Services and communal facilities

SCHEME MANAGERS AND COMMUNITY GARDENERS

Scheme Managers

Each almshouse has a Scheme Manager who oversees the general running of the building and supports the wellbeing of residents. They will support you to live as independently as possible in your own home. Your Scheme Manager is on duty during normal office hours, Monday to Friday.

The following are some of the services that your Scheme Manager provides:

- Being the first point of contact for you and your relatives or next of kin
- Showing you how to use the equipment in your home, for example the heating and the warden call system
- Overseeing health and safety
- Keeping up-to-date contact details for organisations that can support you to live independently
- Helping you with tasks such as applying for benefits
- Helping organise social activities for residents

The following are examples of services that are **not provided** by the Scheme Managers or other members of staff:

- Staff cannot administer medication, injections or eye or ear drops, but can help arrange assistance with this if you let them know you need help
- Staff cannot lend money to or borrow money from residents, become involved in their personal financial affairs, or look after their valuables



If you enjoy gardening, the team will welcome your help and will advise you on how to approach tasks safely.

Community gardeners

Our community gardeners work across both almshouses and are responsible for the upkeep of the communal gardens and supporting residents to be involved in gardening activities or to simply enjoy the gardens.

Both almshouses have a greenhouse, raised beds and compost bins. If you enjoy gardening, the team will welcome your help and will advise you on how to approach tasks safely.

An overview of the annual gardening schedule is below:

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mowing												
Edging												
Weeding												
Watering												
Planting (trees/shrubs)												
Planting (herbaceous)												
Planting (annuals)												
Lifting/dividing												
Pruning (roses)												
Seed sowing												



“WARDEN CALL” SYSTEM

Your home has been fitted with a “warden call” system. This system supports you to call for help in the event of an emergency and to let the Scheme Manager know you are OK if you have opted to do this.

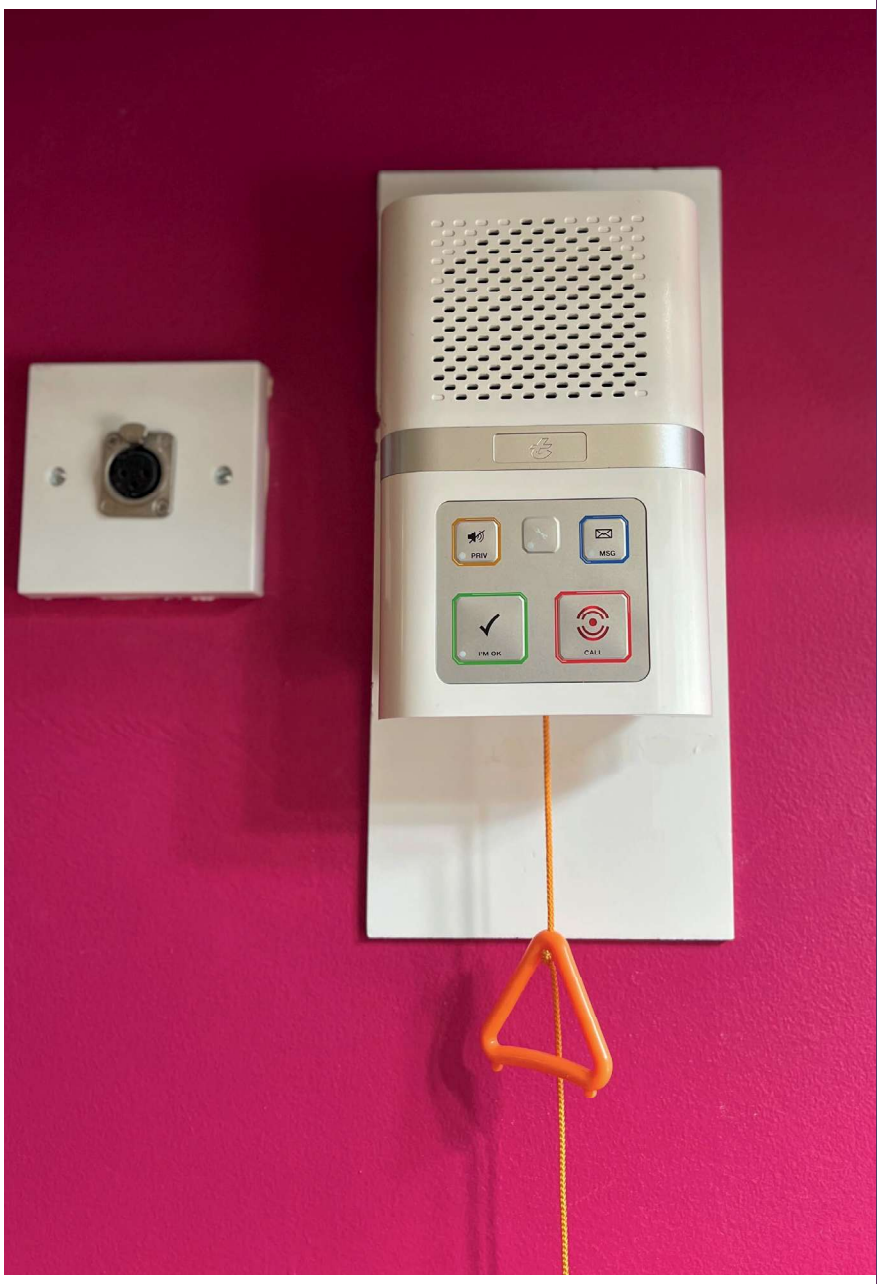
Your Scheme Manager will ask you whether you wish to opt-in to the **‘I’m OK’** service on weekdays. The **‘I’m OK’** service is not available on weekends or bank holidays. If you have opted in, just press the ‘I’m OK’ button, which you will find on the call panel, on weekday mornings. If you do not press the ‘I’m OK’ button, the Scheme Manager will attempt to contact you on the telephone. If they are unsuccessful, they will call at your flat and, if you do not answer, access your property via the master key with a witness, to check on you. If you are not at home, they may then contact your next of kin.

Most of our residents use the service once a day on weekdays, but you can ask for more than one check in if you need to. This can be particularly helpful if you have recently been unwell or have just got out of hospital.

If you do not want to use the ‘I’m OK’ service at all, just let your Scheme Manager know.

The Scheme Managers do not work at weekends or Bank Holidays. If you would like someone to check up on you on those days, please arrange this with a friend, family member or one of your neighbours.

You will also be given a pendant, which you can use to call for help in an emergency, or you can use the orange pull cords in your flat or communal areas. If you use the pendant during working hours, your Scheme Manager will go straight to your flat, so if you are in a communal area, please try and use the pull cord there instead. If your Scheme Manager is not on site, for example, because it is the weekend, the call will be diverted to Careline, who will arrange emergency support.



COMMUNAL AREAS

Communal lounge

Each almshouse has a communal lounge, which is used for organised events such as coffee mornings, quizzes and staff meetings, as well as for informal socialising. Information about events is advertised in the weekly newsletters and displayed on the noticeboards.

Library

Sycamore House has a library, which is shared by residents and staff.

Wi-Fi and Computer

Free Wi-Fi is available in each communal lounge. There is also a computer you can use in the communal lounge of John Betts House and in the library of Sycamore House. The computer systems are the property of the Charity, and we reserve the right to withdraw this service if there are concerns about misuse.

Please remember that inappropriate use of the internet (such as viewing, transmitting or storing obscene material) could lead to legal action against both you and the Charity. Trustees may also view it as a breach of the terms of your letter of appointment, which may mean you would be asked to move out of your flat.

Laundry

If you do not have your own washing machine or tumble dryer, you are welcome to use the ones in the communal laundry. Please speak to your Scheme Manager, who can add you to the rota.

Guest flat

Each almshouse has a guest flat. If you want to book this for a friend or family member, please speak to your Scheme Manager, who will confirm the charge for the booking. Priority is given to relatives of any resident who needs short-term support from a family member due to ill health.

The guest room charge may be increased annually.

Shared staircases, corridors and balconies

These areas are designated fire escape routes, so please keep them clear of any items that could cause an obstruction.

Smoking or vaping

Smoking or vaping is not permitted in the communal areas at any time. If you are expecting a member of staff or contractor to visit you, please avoid smoking inside your flat for at least an hour before they arrive and leave a window open to help clear the property of smoke.

Storage areas

We have areas to store non-flammable items, such as foldable shopping trolleys and suit-cases. Space is limited, so please speak to your Scheme Manager before storing anything. Items are left at your own risk and must be clearly labelled with your name and flat number. The Charity has no responsibility for stored items. Cupboards housing electric meters must never be used to store anything.

Bike racks

Both almshouses have bike racks at the rear, where you can keep your bike. Bikes are left at your own risk, and the Charity cannot compensate you if your bike is damaged or goes missing.

Mobility scooters

There are mobility scooter stores at each almshouse. Space is limited, so please speak to your Scheme Manager before storing your mobility scooter there. Please do not block access to the charging points or cables.

You are responsible for the safety and charging of your mobility scooter, as well as for arranging your own insurance to cover you for any liabilities or damage.

The electricity supply to the storerooms operates between 8am - 8pm daily. Scooters are not to be charged outside of these hours.

The Charity cannot take any responsibility for damaged or stolen scooters.

E-bikes and e-scooters

The use and storage of e-bikes and e-scooters is prohibited on Hammersmith United Charities premises. This is due to the very high risk of fire associated with these vehicles.

Parking

There is no on-site parking for residents or your visitors. However, drop-off points can be used to unload shopping or other items, for a maximum of 30 minutes.

Pets

Pets are not usually allowed, other than fish and small caged birds. The Head of Housing and Property will consider requests for pet ownership on a case-by-case basis. If they agree to you having a pet, you will need to meet several conditions, such as taking out insurance to cover the risk of your pet causing damage and ensuring the pet is not a nuisance to other residents.

Wildlife

Bird feeders are not permitted as this attracts vermin. Please do not feed foxes, birds and other wildlife yourself; there are natural food sources available for wildlife in the local habitat.



Rubbish and recycling

You will find rubbish and recycling bins at the rear of the buildings.

- **Black bins – household waste only**
- **Orange bins – recycling waste only, for plastic, glass, paper and cardboard**

A Bokashi bin can be found in the communal kitchen at Sycamore. This is a Japanese food composter used to ferment food scraps, creating a nutrient-rich soil conditioner that will be added to our compost once it has broken down. Food scraps must be cut up into small pieces before being placed into the bins. There is a compost turner at John Betts House, near the greenhouse.

There are no on-site facilities for disposing of large items or electrical goods; however, your Scheme Manager can give you details of organisations that collect or provide drop-off points for these types of items.

Fly-tipping is monitored via CCTV across the schemes and anyone who does not dispose of items appropriately will be charged any removal costs.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS



You will receive a weekly newsletter with relevant information, such as events, staff changes and articles from residents.

We welcome suggestions and feedback. Please speak to a member of staff or use the suggestion box, which is checked weekly.

We would also love you to attend our regular Residents' Forum. If you would like to suggest something to discuss at the Residents Forum, please let your Scheme Manager know or put a message in the Suggestion Box. Notes from the Residents' Forum are circulated with the newsletter within two weeks.

Access to information

We want to be open and transparent about how we manage our almshouses and the services we provide.

We mostly make information about our housing services, policies and performance available through the newsletters, noticeboard and Residents Forum meetings, some information is also available on our website.

From April 2027, residents, or someone acting on their behalf, will also be able to ask us for information about the management of our almshouses under the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs).

If you would like information or need help finding it, please speak to your Scheme Manager.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The Charity takes responsibility for the repairs and maintenance of any white goods that we have provided, as well as for internal fixtures and fittings and the furniture in communal areas.

If you need something repairing, please speak to your Scheme Manager during their normal office hours, unless it is an emergency. If it is an emergency and you cannot get hold of your Scheme Manager, then please use the warden call system to contact Careline.

In most cases, we will give our contractors your contact details so they can arrange to visit at a time that suits you. If the issue needs to be resolved quickly, for example leaking water, and you are not at home, we may need to give the contractor access in your absence.

Emergency repairs or hazards

A repair or hazard is an emergency if it poses an immediate and significant risk to the health or safety of residents or could cause serious damage to a property or building.

Emergency repairs or hazards will be investigated and made safe within 24 hours.

Emergency repairs include:

- Total loss of electricity or a dangerous electrical fault, such as sparking cables
- Your toilet being unusable
- A blocked drain or serious leak of sewage
- The heating breaking down fully in winter when there is no other form of heating
- An uncontrollable or uncontainable leak of water from heating pipes, tank, taps or toilet cistern
- Damp or mould that poses an immediate and significant risk to health
- Any issue that poses a risk to a resident, the public or to the structure of the building

We aim to fix urgent issues within seven days.

Routine repairs

Routine repairs are all other minor repairs that are the Charity's responsibility. We aim to fix them within 28 days.

Contractor Code of Conduct

In 2025, we introduced a Code of Conduct for contractors in response to resident feedback. The Code of Conduct sets standards of behaviour for contractors when on site, it also includes the requirement for appointments to be made with residents prior to routine works.

If you have any complaints (or compliments!) about a contractor please let your Scheme Manager know.



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Health and safety

SECURITY AND CCTV

Each almshouse is accessed through the front door or other secure entrances, for which you will be given a key or fob. For everyone's safety, please take care of your keys or fobs and do not let anyone in the building who you do not know. Some doors are fitted with spy holes or door entry systems so you can see who is at your door.

It is crucial that we can enter residents' flats using our master key in an emergency, so please do not change your lock or add extra locks. Your Scheme Manager will only use the master key with your permission, in an emergency, or where we have reasonable grounds to be concerned for your welfare. For example, this may be necessary if there is a serious water leak and you are not at home, or if you have not pressed your 'I'm OK' button and we have been unable to contact you.

We will not give contractors a master key, so if you have arranged for work to be carried out and you will not be at home, please leave your spare key with a neighbour.

We respect your privacy so will not let visitors into your home if you are not there. However, you are welcome to give a close friend or relative a spare key to your flat.

For extra security, we have CCTV in various external areas.



FIRE SAFETY

We take fire precautions very seriously and ask that you do the same. We carry out regular fire risk assessments and comply with appropriate fire regulations and advice from the Fire Brigade.

Fire prevention and advice saves lives. Take care – do not let a fire start.

In the kitchen

- Do not let fat overheat and never leave pots and pans unattended
- Never put water on burning fat
- Do not cook if you have drunk a lot of alcohol or are likely to fall asleep
- Keep items away from your stove top. For example, do not leave tea towels on the hob

Smokers

- Never smoke in bed
- Always check that your cigarette is properly extinguished
- Always use a proper ashtray and make sure all the cigarettes are fully extinguished before you empty the ashtray

Electrics

- Never overload plug sockets. This includes using a plug adaptor and overloading extension cables
- When you have finished using them, always unplug irons, hair curlers or other small electricals which could cause a fire if left unattended
- Before going to bed, switch TVs, cookers and similar electrical items off and close all your internal doors
- E-scooters and e-bikes are not allowed on the premises and batteries for them should not be charged onsite

Candles

We strongly recommend that you do not use candles. If you do light a candle, keep it well away from curtains and other material and never leave it unattended. Always make sure you blow a candle out before leaving your flat or falling asleep.

Evacuation procedures

You will be given a **personal evacuation plan** so that you know what to do in the event of a fire. The fire alarm panels are linked to the warden call system and will alert the Scheme Manager when they are on site, or Careline out of normal working hours.

We operate **stay put if safe to do so** policies, and you will usually not need to evacuate if the fire is not in your flat.

In case of fire in your flat

If the fire is in your flat, evacuate as soon as possible following the instructions on your personal evacuation plan.

- **Leave immediately, do not stop to gather personal belongings**
- **If you are unable to leave the property, move to a different room from the fire, close the door and if you are able open the window to call for help. The Fire Brigade should already be on their way.**
- **If you can, place a towel or blanket at the base of the door to prevent smoke entering the room.**
- **Do not under any circumstances attempt to return to the property until the lead Fire Officer has told you it is safe to do so.**

Testing fire safety equipment

All fire safety systems and equipment are regularly tested by qualified external contractors, in line with legislation. The fire alarms are tested on Thursdays. If the alarm goes at any other time, please assume that there is a real fire and follow the evacuation procedures. Occasionally, the test might be carried out on a different day, but the alarm will only sound for a few seconds and you will have advance notice of this change.

Oxygen therapy in properties

If you need to use oxygen therapy equipment, you should be given safety instructions, including how to use and store the equipment. This equipment does increase the risk of a fire and so you must let your Scheme Manager know if you are using oxygen at home. We will need to put a sign on your door and update the information that is stored in the fire boxes for the Fire Brigade.

Incidents

If you see or suspect a fire, please hit the emergency fire alarm and follow the evacuation advice above.

If there is any safety incident while staff are offsite, please report it to the Scheme Manager when they are next available.

OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY

Adverse weather

Adverse weather warnings are usually given on the main news channels. If snow, a significant heatwave or other adverse weather conditions are expected, your Scheme Manager will endeavour to offer guidance on staying safe. We recommend stocking up on food and other essentials ahead of time, so you do not need to leave your home.

In icy conditions, the roads and paths outside the almshouse entrances may be slippery as the local authority does not always grit them. The gardeners will endeavour to spread salt on the main pathways when they are on duty.

During periods of very hot weather, you can help to keep yourself and your home cool by:

- drinking plenty of fluids;
- keeping out of direct sunlight and avoiding strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day;
- closing curtains or blinds when the sun is shining directly through your windows and opening windows when it is cooler outside, where it is safe to do so;
- wearing light, loose-fitting clothing.

If you feel seriously unwell during hot weather, seek medical help.

Portable appliance testing

Electrical appliances supplied by the Charity in flats and in communal areas, such as kettles, are tested for safety every year. Please do not bring your own appliances into communal areas as they may not have been recently tested. If a member of staff thinks an appliance or other item that you own might cause a fire risk, we will ask you not to use it and let you know how to arrange for it to be tested.

Water management

We test the water at both almshouses regularly. This includes checking that your toilet flushes and the water temperature is suitable before you move in.
Bacteria can develop in pipes that are not regularly flushed with water, so if you have been away from home for over a week:

- Run all your taps gently for 3-4 minutes. Remember to turn the taps on slowly so you do not splash water as this releases water droplets into the air.
- Put the lid down on the toilet and flush it a couple of times before you use it.

Damp and mould

Please tell your Scheme Manager about any damp, mould or condensation as soon as you notice it. We will investigate the cause and decide what action is required. Following the steps below can help prevent damp and mould from developing:

- Either use the laundry facilities or airdry wet washing in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open.
- Use a bathmat to soak up excess water.
- Turn on the extractor fan in the kitchen when cooking, and in the bathroom when bathing or showering.
- Cover pans with lids when cooking to prevent excess steam.
- Close the kitchen or bathroom doors when you are using those rooms.

Getting involved with Health and Safety

Please contact the Head of Housing and Property if you would like to join a routine tour of the property to carry out health and safety checks.



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Your role in the community

For many residents, one of the greatest advantages of living in an almshouse is the opportunity to be involved in a community. We recognise that everyone has the right to privacy and that different residents will choose to be involved with their community in different ways.

Our values, which we developed with the residents, are respectfulness, kindness and tolerance. By following the behaviours below, we can all help to make sure that we are respecting each other's rights and not making anyone feel uncomfortable:

- Behave respectfully to one another (including staff members and contractors), staying polite even when you disagree.
- Recognise that all residents and staff are valued members of this community.
- Introduce yourself to new people and make them feel welcome; respect the wishes of those who do not wish to join in or who may need time to do so.
- Avoid gossiping about people or talking about them behind their back.
- Listen to the views of others and try to keep an open mind.
- If you have an established group of friends, try not to make other people feel they are not welcome to join in.
- Be considerate when it comes to noise, for example not playing music too loud. Let neighbours know if more noise is expected, for example because lots of people are visiting or furniture is being delivered.
- Keep private information confidential.



Resolving disputes

- Talk to the person sooner rather than later so that any problem can be resolved quickly.
- Consider how you would want to be approached if someone had a problem with you or something you were doing.
- If you feel unable to talk to the person directly, send a short, polite letter explaining the concern. Your neighbour may well be unaware of any issues.
- Listen to your neighbour's response and do not jump to conclusions. They may need some time to think about the matter in private.
- Try to remain calm and do not raise your voice or lose your temper as this is likely to make matters worse.

If something is bothering you, please know that you can always speak to your Scheme Manager or another member of staff. Disputes can usually be resolved before they escalate.

We hope that you find this handbook useful, and that you enjoy living in your home.



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