

BRUNTS CHARITY **ALMSHOUSE RESIDENT'S HANDBOOK**

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

This handbook has been produced with the aim of providing you with some useful information about Brunts Charity. It is also designed to expand upon the information contained in your application documents and letter of appointment and includes details of policies, procedures and other matters which may affect you as an almshouse resident.

BRUNTS ALMSHOUSE CHARITY

Brunts Charity was formed in 1711 and now manages 153 almshouses located in the Mansfield District and surrounding area.

The Charity is managed by eleven Trustees and is registered with both the Charity Commission and The Housing and Communities Agency.

Our basic aim is to allocate the almshouses in the Charity's ownership to qualified beneficiaries. A qualified beneficiary is defined as a qualifying person over 60 years of age, living within the old borough of Mansfield who is financially unable to solve their housing problems in the local market. In certain circumstances people with a recognised disability between the age of 55 and 60 will be also considered by the Trustees.

TERMS OF OCCUPATION

As a qualified beneficiary of an Almshouse Charity, **you are not a Tenant and therefore you do not benefit from protection under the Landlord and Tenant Acts.** The almshouse is allocated to you on a letter of appointment or licence agreement. However, the Trustees will not ask you to leave unless there are exceptional circumstances or you breach the Licensee's obligations.

The licence agreement contains certain obligations and these are dealt with overleaf. Please ensure you read and understand the obligations contained in both your Letter of Appointment and this Handbook.

THE CHARITY'S OBLIGATIONS

- * to grant the resident possession of the premises at the commencement of the licence,
- * to keep in good repair the structure and exterior of the premises and any fixed installations provided by the Charity for space heating, water heating, sanitation and for the supply of water, gas and electricity as outlined in the attached list.
- * to keep the exterior of the premises in a good state of decoration and to maintain in good order the gardens provided for the benefit of all residents.

THE LICENSEE'S OBLIGATIONS

- * To take possession of the property at the commencement of the licence.
- * To use the premises for residential purposes only and occupy as your sole residence.
- * Not to cause nuisance, use threatening behaviour, act unreasonably or cause annoyance to neighbours, staff or the Charity's contractors.
- * Not to commit or allow invited visitors to commit any form of anti social behaviour to neighbours, staff or the Charity's contractors.
- * Not to keep any animals in the property or encourage them to visit the property.
- * To keep the interior of the premises in a good and clean condition.
- * To make good any damage to the property or fittings caused by the residents or invited visitor.
- * Not to remove or make any alterations to the premises on any fixtures and fittings provided by the Charity without prior approval of the Trustees.
- * To report promptly to the Warden any disrepair or defect for which the Charity is responsible. A list of the Charity's responsibilities is included with this Handbook.
- * To correctly dispose of all rubbish.
- * To allow reasonable access to officers, staff and contractors to provide services, inspect the Property or carry out repairs.
- * Not to take in any lodger or allow anyone else to live in the premises unless by prior approval of the Trustees.
- * To inform the Warden or Operations Manager if you go away for any period of more than 1 day in case there is an Emergency and not to leave the property vacant for more than a total of 30 days in any calendar year.
- * To provide at least 4 weeks notice in writing when you wish to vacate the property.
- * To provide vacant possession and return the keys at the end of the licence leaving the premises, fixtures and fittings in good condition, replacing any removed or damaged items.

The resident must also advise the Trustees immediately if there is any material change to their financial position so as to render them no longer able to qualify as a beneficiary of the Charity

Failure to meet these obligations may result in you being asked to leave the property

THE WEEKLY MAINTENANCE CONTRIBUTION

As an almshouse resident the weekly charge you pay for your home is known as the weekly maintenance contribution (WMC).

The amount you pay is authorised by the Charity Commission and the Housing and Communities Agency and covers the cost of running the almshouses and includes but not exclusively :-

- a) water and sewerage charges (unless the Resident is on a separate water meter)
- b) repairs and maintenance as set out on the Charity's responsibilities list attached.
- c) buildings insurance. Contents insurance is the responsibility of the resident.
- d) landscaping and gardening of communal areas.
- e) warden services and warden emergency call system

The charge is designed to be affordable to residents where income is low. Part of the charge will be eligible for housing benefit.

As the maintenance contribution funds the cost of running the properties it is essential that the payments are made promptly when due. The Charity will advise you of any future changes in writing with not less than 4 weeks notice. The charge should be paid **every four weeks** directly into the Charity's bank account. The commencement date will be shown on your Letter of Appointment.

If you experience difficulty with the payment of the maintenance contribution you should immediately contact the Operations Manager at Brunts Charity.

Brunts Charity will be happy to provide help and advice including welfare and housing benefit advice to enable you to meet your payment obligations.

If you consistently fail to pay the WMC your licence to occupy can be terminated with 4 weeks notice.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Brunts Charity are responsible for the repairs shown on the attached list.

THE REPAIRS PROCEDURE

All repair work that is the Charity's responsibility should be reported promptly in the first instance to the Warden who will arrange for it to be carried out if it is the responsibility of the Charity.

Depending on the nature of the repair, we may need to prioritise work.:-

- a) Priority 1 - Emergency - within 24 hours
- b) Priority 2 - Urgent - a repair which significantly affects the comfort or convenience of the resident - within 3 days
- c) Priority 3 - Non-urgent - repairs which can safely wait to be dealt with within 4 weeks

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Guests

The Trustees encourage residents' friends and relatives to visit and therefore a guest bedroom at each community centre is available at a modest fee. The Trustees do allow grandchildren under 18 years of age to stay in the residents' accommodation for up to 7 days in any calendar year (further periods with the express permission of the Trustees) and adults up to 2 days in an emergency or where it is impractical to use the guest bedroom. Longer periods must be with the express permission of the Trustees. Residents must advise the Warden of guests prior to them visiting.

Lodgers and sub tenants are strictly not allowed.

Gardens

The gardens have been laid out for the benefit of all residents. The Charity is responsible for maintaining the gardens i.e. for cutting the grass etc. Any help however from either the resident (or relative) in keeping the garden area attractive will be welcome.

The Warden Service

Brunts Charity will employ wardens as appropriate who will be responsible for the general welfare of the residents, dealing with emergencies, housing management and maintenance issues and encouraging the social welfare of the residents. Your property is not part of a sheltered housing scheme and Residents must be able to look after themselves.

Emergency Call System

The system is provided to enable you to receive help and assistance in the event of sudden illness or accident when the Warden is not available.

If you go away for any period of time, you should inform the Warden in case there is an emergency.

If you are ill or in difficulty, the Warden will make every effort to get in touch with relatives, friends or the doctor. To enable us to act quickly, we need to have a record of the names and addresses of your nearest relatives, friends and your doctor. It is also important that we are advised of any change to these details.

When your front door is locked you should ensure the key is removed from the lock so that access can be gained in an emergency. For this reason you should avoid fixing chains or bolts to the inside of the front door.

Insurances

The trustees have an insurance policy to cover the buildings. This does not cover resident's contents, you are strongly advised to take out appropriate insurance of your own to cover your contents.

Frost Precautions

In extremely cold weather, serious damage can be caused in pipes, cisterns, sinks and basins by the expansion of water when it freezes. This can result in bursts when the thaw comes.

In order to protect against burst pipes you should endeavour to keep the whole dwelling as warm as possible and know where the stop tap is and how to turn it off.

Nuisance and Harassment

It is expected that each resident will show consideration for other residents and try to ensure they do not disturb each other.

If you are experiencing nuisance from your neighbour you should first talk to the neighbour about the problem. Most problems are resolved in this way. In the first instance the matter should be reported to the Warden. However, if you are persistently disturbed, you should complain to the Operations Manager.

Your complaint will be treated in confidence and will be investigated. In many cases of this type our powers are limited often to making offenders aware of the problem or acting as mediators to attempt to achieve a reconciliation.

The Charity takes a serious view of any form of harassment. In these cases serious action resulting in eviction will be taken against anyone who harasses others including residents, members of staff or the Charity's contractors.

Pets

No animals will be permitted in the premises.

Complaints

Although we hope you will have no reason to complain about the service we provide, if you do have a complaint it should be addressed in the first instance to the Operations Manager who will attempt to solve the problem.

If you are still dissatisfied you should write to the Senior Management Committee who will investigate the matter and reply to you. The decision of the Committee is final.

If you remain dissatisfied you may complain to the Housing Ombudsman at 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN, telephone 0300 111 3000 who will investigate complaints against registered organisations once the organisations own procedure has been exhausted. You must register your complaint with them within 6 months.

Consultation

The Charity will inform residents of any changes relating to their residency and/or substantial changes in the housing management or maintenance of their homes.

In these cases full consultation will take place in order to seek the views of residents.

This communication could take various forms including telephone conversation or letter but in most cases would involve personal meeting with all residents or with residents in their own homes.

WHAT IF I BECOME DISABLED?

You will only be asked to leave your home on very specific grounds.

You may however find that you are experiencing difficulty in managing the home on your own due to failing health or disability.

We are concerned to ensure that you are able to remain in your home for as long as possible. The Operations Manager will therefore be happy to discuss any arrangement with you and your relatives.

We will liaise on your behalf with your G.P. or Social Services to ensure your needs are catered for. This might be through an appropriate package of care which you can receive in your home to enable you to carry on living there.

Only if an appropriate care package cannot be provided in your home would you be expected to make provision to move into more appropriate accommodation such as a Residential or Nursing Home where your needs can more properly be met.

BRUNTS CHARITY

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Chairman of Trustees: Mr. K. F. Williams
Operations Manager : Mr. H Glenn

PLEASE NOTE: - in the first instance all enquiries should be addressed to your Warden.

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