

Bristol & Anchor Almshouse

Residents' Handbook

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Section 1 – Introduction

The Bristol & Anchor Almshouse charity would like to extend a very warm welcome to you as a new resident. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be very happy here. This handbook sets out useful information about the charity and its general administration and management. It also explains your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to the clerk/warden if you need further information on any matters.

Please note that the conditions stated in this handbook form part of your contract with the charity and supplement the rules and regulations given in your Letter of Appointment which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend these rules and regulations from time to time but any changes would be discussed with residents beforehand when you would be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The almshouse is your home and every effort will be made to help you remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle and able to benefit from the quiet enjoyment and dignity that the almshouses provide. I am sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting the wishes of others, allowing them their privacy if that is

what they wish and ensuring that rumours and gossip are not allowed to develop.

The trustees have tried to minimise these rules and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of the trust.

Once again, a very warm welcome.

Chairman: Mrs Liz Evans

Trustees: Mrs Dinah Bernard
Vice Chair –
for all others trustees please ask the Clerk
for the list

Clerk: Jessica Cornes

Pam & Adrian Osborne – caretakers
Office Number 0117 935 4471

Emergency out of hour's– **please pull orange cord in flat/cottage**

Section 2 – History, Governance and Management

Historical Note

The Bristol and Anchor Almshouse Charity was formed in 1999, following the merger of a number of almshouse charities: Bristol (St John and St Ambrose) Almshouse Charity St James' Whitson Almshouse Charity Mr Hill's Jacob's Wells Almshouse Charity Close to St George's Park, Whitehall, the almshouses consist of 14 flats built in 1997, a terrace of renovated Victorian cottages and a thriving day services centre for older people. Its history can be traced back over 500 years, to two Bristol merchants, William Spencer and Robert Strange, who had a number of joint commercial ventures.

Constitution

The trust is a registered charity governed by a Charity Commission Scheme – registered charity number 1075673

Management

The trust is governed by a board of voluntary, local trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is delegated to the clerk assisted by the warden.

The Almshouses

The charity manages unfurnished dwellings which are often designed with the needs of older people in mind. At Bristol & Anchor we have 8 cottages suitable for one person and 14 flats suitable for either one or two people

The principle behind everything that the trust does is that residents should enjoy independence and the freedom to come and go as they please while living in comfortable and secure accommodation. Residents should feel confident in the knowledge that support will always be available, whether from the trust itself or from outside agencies, should the need arise. Above all, the trust respects residents' privacy.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

Doctor and Dentist

If you do not have a General Practitioner (GP), the clerk/warden will be able to give you the names of GP practices in the neighbourhood. The name of your GP must be given to the clerk/warden.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse or other carer in confidence and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you have a chronic health problem, it would be advisable, and you might feel safer, for the clerk/warden to be made aware of it so that appropriate action can be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the clerk/warden will be kept in confidence within the charity.

The Emergency Call System

Please do not tie up the orange pull cords. If you fall, you may not be able to reach them.

Emergency Contact Details

If you become ill or are in difficulties, the office will make every effort to get in touch with your next of kin, your doctor, or the ambulance or social services on your behalf.

It is important that you let the clerk have details (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) of these essential contacts. If the details change from time to time, please remember to inform the charity.

Fire Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. The fire policies are frequently reviewed to ensure that every resident knows what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency.

All of the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger the fire alarm. ***If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.***

Evacuation Policy: When you hear the fire alarm, follow the fire procedure. If it is safe to do so, please evacuate the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point. The exit routes and fire escapes are clearly marked with green signs in the corridors. Shut the door of your almshouse behind you and do not attempt to take any personal belongings with you. Wear warm clothing and leave your flat immediately.

When the fire alarm sounds, the fire service should respond immediately.

Avoiding the Risk of Fire: Please be conscious of the risk of fire, for example, regularly checking at night or before going out that appliances have been fully switched off. It is especially important that those who smoke in their own almshouse dwelling do so responsibly and are aware of the risk of falling asleep or getting too close to curtains while smoking. Do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended and use ash trays if you smoke.

Smoking in bed or in the common parts of the building is strictly forbidden. Please be considerate to others and avoid smoking in their presence as the risks associated with passive smoking are now well recognised. If you are expecting visitors, please air the room beforehand so that any smoke can dissipate.

Slips, Trips and Falls

The trustees wish to draw your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths in wet, snowy or icy weather. Whilst reasonable precautions will be taken to keep them hazard-free.

Security

Please consider the following:

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times
- Use the 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** kept in permanent use as this may prevent access in an emergency.

DO NOT

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. If you are in doubt, please call the clerk/warden, a family friend, the alarm control centre or the police
- Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

BE AWARE OF bogus officials or doorstep salesmen. Always ask for proof of identity.

Keys

Never allow anyone claiming to be gas, electricity or water meter readers to enter the dwelling. Please refer them to the office.

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. You must not fit locks and

chains without the trustees' consent as these may delay access for emergency services. Chains should only be used when you wish to identify callers before deciding whether to let them in. The trustees may advise on alternative security arrangements.

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

Your privacy will be respected. Staff & Contractors 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 obtain extra keys without first asking the trustees, as this may lessen security.

Make sure that you and your visitors check that the main front door to the house is securely shut after entry or exit.

Routine Visits

Residents will be visited in their new home by representatives of the charity after you have settled in and thereafter from time to time. This is an opportunity to get to know you better and to address any issues and concerns.

A mutually convenient time will be arranged beforehand.

Section 4 – Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, explains that you occupy the almshouses as a beneficiary of the charity. This means that you are not a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers and that in exceptional circumstances the trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave. In practice, this occurs very rarely when trustees believe that they have no alternative.

Examples of such circumstances are if:

- A resident was no longer able to look after themselves safely or to live independently, even with the help of the social services or family support
- The resident consistently failed to pay weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) on a regular basis without good reason
- The resident's behaviour was deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents or members of staff
- The resident's circumstances changed significantly to the extent that they were no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary.

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the charity with accurate and complete information of their financial circumstances and that residents inform the charity if their circumstances change. However, residents should be assured that only in the most unusual circumstances would this lead to someone being asked to leave.

The charity would only set aside an appointment as a last resort after every effort had been made to resolve the issues. If, having been asked to leave, a resident felt aggrieved, they have the right to have their case heard in the County Court. If the decision to set aside the appointment was upheld, they would be given every assistance to find alternative accommodation.

Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

Weekly maintenance contributions are payable in advance on the first of each month by direct debit/standing order. If you receive Housing Benefit from the local authority, arrangements can be made for your Housing Benefit to be paid directly into the charity's bank account. If you

are experiencing difficulties in claiming, please let the charity know.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. Items covered by the WMC include:

- Water and sewage charges
- Upkeep of the garden
- Repairs and maintenance
- Cleaning of communal areas
- B&A Staff salaries
- Call system

Consulting Residents

The trustees will hold meetings from time to time to discuss the running of the almshouses with you and your neighbours. 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 consult 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 payable
- Before anyone enters your home
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

Absence from Home

If you go away for any period, please inform the charity of your temporary address and contact phone number. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the charity immediately you get home as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

You are expected to be in full time occupation of your almshouse and extended periods away during the year might lead the trustees to conclude that you have less need for almshouse accommodation than others. If you plan to be away from your dwelling for a period more than 28 days in any one year, please would you explain the circumstances to the charity and ask permission.

Before going away, please ensure that all food has been put away, taps and appliances have been fully switched off and windows shut. If you are leaving your flat during the winter months, please discuss with the clerk how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes, etc.

Central heating, electricity and hot water

Residents are not allowed to use any heating appliance that has not been supplied by the charity, such as portable gas or electric heaters, as these pose a serious safety risk. The use of paraffin oil is also strictly prohibited.

Each flat/cottage is fitted with a thermostat which enables residents to adjust the temperature as required. All hot water taps are fitted with thermostatic mixing valves to avoid water scalding.

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 place a plastic bag over the shower head before turning on the water. This can be removed once the water begins to flow. If you have just returned from a stay in hospital, please ask the Scheme Warden to do this for you.

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. For all major 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, reduce the amenities for subsequent occupants, or increase future maintenance costs, it will not be approved. If you live in a listed building, some alterations will need local authority consent before any work can be carried out.

Employment

Neither the almshouse nor its garden may be used as a place of business, either from where to conduct business or to store items connected with running a business.

Visitors – Family and Friends

Visitors are not permitted to stay in an almshouse, except with the consent of the

trustees. Visitors may not occupy the almshouse for more than 4 weeks in any calendar year.

Pets

If you wish to keep a pet you must first obtain the written permission of the trustees. Small animals or caged birds are usually acceptable but must not become a nuisance to other residents. Please advise the Clerk about arrangements you have made for the care of your pet(s) if you are away on holiday or become ill.

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.

If a resident were to leave their almshouse dwelling without giving notice, they would be liable for paying their WMC until the end of the notice period. Weekly maintenance contributions should be paid up to the departure date.

Trustees have the right to start the process of Setting Aside the Appointment in the event of non-payment of WMC.

Re-Housing

If you wish to move from one dwelling to another, you should contact the clerk to discuss the matter. While every effort would be made to assist a resident to move if there was a good reason, the decision would depend upon availability and be entirely at the discretion of the trustees.

The trustees may require you to move to another of the charity's almshouses when major repair work is being carried out, or for some other unforeseen reason. Your views would be taken into account and you would be given at least three months' notice should a move be necessary.

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 in confidence.

Section 5 – Services Provider

The Clerk

The Clerk & office staff supports the general wellbeing of residents without interfering in their lives or intruding on their privacy. Bristol & Anchor staff are not trained carers and cannot therefore offer personal care support. They can, however, liaise on your behalf with a wide range of local health and social services to ensure that you receive the help you need to remain safe and independent in your home. These services might include help with personal care and hygiene, meal preparation and provision, cleaning or shopping or the provision of physiotherapy or occupational therapy aides for use around the home.

The Clerk also looks after the building. In an emergency the Clerk or office staff will call for help on your behalf and notify your family and friends.

The Almshouse is independent living and therefore we do not have full-time staff on site. Please remember that when the Clerk is off duty, he/she should not be called to attend to routine matters which could be left until the following morning. In an emergency please pull your orange cord

Bristol & Anchor office staff might speak to everyone through the system to ensure all is well.

Community Alarm Service (CAS)

It may be a condition of occupancy that residents are required to have a landline installed in order

that their almshouse can be connected to the Community Alarm System.

A helpline connects the resident to a call centre which is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days year.

It will handle emergency calls for health, police, fire and ambulance.

You can call CAS by:

- Pulling any one of the orange cords

Please do NOT tie up the pull cords as it may be out of reach when you need to use it.

The Beehive

The Beehive is for the use of all residents and their visitors. It is equipped with kitchen, computer room, hairdressers, film room

The Beehive is used for lunches, coffee mornings and afternoon tea parties organised by the warden, but residents are very welcome to use this facility, for example, for birthday celebrations. Bookings should be made through the office

Laundry Facilities

The almshouses provide a laundry room with a washing machine and tumble drier. You will be shown how to use the machines. You will be allocated a laundry slot by the Warden. No residents are to fit washing machines or dryers into their flats or cottages.

Furniture and Fittings

Although the almshouses are offered unfurnished, the trust is nevertheless responsible for providing carpets and cookers.

Gardens

The maintenance of the communal areas is the responsibility of the charity. We employ a firm of gardeners to maintain the garden on a monthly basis. Residents are encouraged to maintain the garden. There is the use of a garden shed (please speak to the office to be shown where this is)

Repairs and Decorations

The trust is responsible for both external and internal repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. 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 work to be carried out. Workmen will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made, however, if an emergency arises such as a water leak.

Insurance

The charity insures the building and its own contents. All residents are responsible for the insurance of their own possessions in the flat/cottage.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than is necessary to meet day-to-day expenses and keep valuables out of sight. (*Bristol & Anchor is not allowed to take responsibility for your money*).

Television

Residents need a television licence to use any television-receiving equipment including TV set, set-top box, video or DVD recorder, PC or mobile phone to watch or record programmes as they are being broadcast. This includes foreign broadcasts.

Television licences are free to all people aged 75 and over.

There are television concessions available to:

- Those who are blind or severely sight impaired
- People who are retired or disabled and live in certain types of accommodation
- Households with a person aged 75 years or over.

Trustees must apply for concessionary licences on behalf of their residents. To qualify residents

must meet certain requirements. Please refer to the trustees for further details.

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own flat clean, including cleaning the windows inside. If cleaning becomes difficult or you cannot clean the windows safely, please advise the clerk who will make alternative arrangements. There is likely to be a small hourly charge if this becomes necessary.

Cleaning the communal areas is the responsibility of the charity and the cost of this service will form part of the weekly maintenance contribution. You will be advised when contractors are coming to clean the outside of the windows of your flat.

Training

When you move into your home the warden will ensure that you are familiar with:

- Action to be taken in the event of a fire
- How to operate all the equipment in your home
- Central heating, emergency call systems.

Refuse collection and recycling

Refuse is normally collected on Tuesday each week. The large bins are located next to the car park

(We encourage recycling and the bins are located next to the car park)

Telephones

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing a telephone in your flat through your chosen provider.

Visiting Services

Please contact the office as we have a hairdresser, chiropodist, visit the Beehive on a regular basis

Section 6 – General Information

Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit

You are responsible for paying your own council tax and will receive the annual Council Tax Notice from the local authority in March each year. People living alone are entitled to council tax relief of 25%.

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have only modest savings, you may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit.

Depending upon your precise circumstances, this could pay your council tax in whole or in part. Please speak to the clerk/warden if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the claim form.

Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance/Universal Credit

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 or Local Housing Allowance to help with your housing costs. Even if you do have income in addition to your basic retirement pension, you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance you should ask for an application form at your local Benefits Office (DWP) or Housing Department. It is important that you inform your local benefits office if there are changes in your financial circumstances as they have the power to demand reimbursement in the event of an over-payment.

Eligibility for state benefits changes from time to time. If you need advice on state benefits, please ask the clerk in the first instance as he/she will have some experience of entitlements and benefits. Other sources of information are the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK

Parking

Please do not park in unauthorised places, or allow your visitors to do so, as their cars may block the way for ambulances or fire engines attending in an emergency. Non-residents are not permitted to use the car park except for picking up or dropping residents off, or unloading

Wills

You are strongly advised to make a Will and it is best to ask a solicitor to help you with this. If you

need help in finding one, the local Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to suggest names.

As stated under 'Gifts and Legacies' it is the trust's policy that no one involved in the running of the trust should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you want to donate anything to the trust, please speak to the clerk. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Lasting Power of Attorney

You may also feel it wise to consider setting up a Lasting Power of Attorney which allows you to appoint someone to look after your finances and to take welfare and healthcare decisions on your behalf in the event of your mental incapacity. Again you should seek legal advice from a solicitor.

Local Organisations and Services

Many of the trust's residents take advantage of a rich variety of organisations and services for the elderly in the borough. These include:

- Age UK
- *LinkAge – based at The Beehive*

Please speak to the clerk/warden to find out more about these and other local services available for the elderly.

Social Activities

A welcome sense of community can result from residents taking part in social activities together. Friendships grow and there is a greater readiness to support one another through difficult times. We find that some residents enjoy occasional opportunities to do things together, while others prefer to pursue their interests on their own. There is no pressure therefore to take part in the organised activities.

Lunch club Tuesday

Film Club Tuesday

Please speak to the Warden regarding activities at The Beehive

Social Media

Those residents using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via social media about the charity, its trustees, other residents or staff.

Section 7 – If Things Go Wrong

Personal Problems

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no family or friends whom you feel able to consult, the trustees will be pleased to help or offer advice if they can. You can ask to see the clerk/warden or any of the trustees and your concerns will be treated in the utmost confidence.

Complaints

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the clerk/warden who will do their best to resolve them. In the majority of cases, minor issues can be dealt with informally, quickly and efficiently and to the resident's satisfaction. The trustees and the clerk can only resolve problems and improve the service if you speak up when things go wrong.

Set out below is a procedure to be followed if residents wish to raise a complaint in connection with the occupation of their almshouse, or about services provided by the charity.

- Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Bristol & Anchor office
- If the office is unable to resolve the matter, or if there is a persistent problem with pets, loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, the resident should refer it to the clerk in writing. All communications about complaints will be treated in confidence.
- If you are dissatisfied with the clerk's response, you should write formally to the chairman of trustees asking the trustees to consider the matter. You may, if you wish, attend the meeting when your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend or adviser. The chairman will write to you afterwards to advise you of the trustees' decision and to inform you of any action taken to resolve your complaint.
- If you have a complaint about a member of staff employed by the charity, other residents, or about a serious breach of health and safety regulations, you should put your complaint in writing to the chairman of trustees, 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 adviser.

Housing Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied with the trustees' decision, you have the right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service whose address is:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych,
London WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

You will need to give the Ombudsman your full name, address and telephone number and set out the details of your complaint. The Ombudsman will only be able to consider your complaint if he/she is satisfied that the trust's own procedure for handling complaints has been exhausted.