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INTRODUCTION

The St Pancras Almshouse would like to welcome you to your new home. We hope you will settle in quickly and be very happy here.

This handbook provides essential information about the running of the Almshouse and also sets out your responsibilities as a resident. Do not hesitate to speak to the managers if you would like further details.

Please note that the conditions set out in this handbook form part of your contract with the charity and supplement the rules and regulations contained in the Letter of Appointment you signed on being admitted to the Almshouse. The trustees have designed these rules and regulations for the

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benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of the Trust.

It may be necessary from time to time to amend rules but all changes will be discussed with residents beforehand so you have the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

More information about the policies that govern the management of the Almshouse can be found on our website at stpancrasalmshouses.org

The Almshouse management aims to help you to remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle and enjoy the peace and dignity that the Almshouse provides.

Once again, a very warm welcome.

The chairman



CHAPTER 1

History and governance

The early days

The St Pancras Almshouses charity was founded in 1850 by a group of local philanthropists brought together by Dr Donald Fraser, senior churchwarden of St Pancras Church. The first Almshouse was built in Wilkin Street just north of Prince of Wales Road. One hundred residents lived there until the Hampstead & City Junction Railway Company acquired the site in 1859 for the construction of its train line from Camden Town to Gospel Oak. The present building was constructed between 1860 and 1863. You can find more details about the Almshouse's history on our website at stpancrasalmshouses.org

Constitution and management

The St Pancras Almshouses charity is governed by the Charity Commission, registry number 214135. The Almshouse itself is run by unpaid trustees according to a scheme adopted in July 2004. Their task is to set the Almshouse rules, admit residents, maintain the building and accommodation, appoint staff and handle the charity's investments.

Day-to-day management is the responsibility of a manager and an assistant manager who report to the trustees through the chairman.

Our trustees and managers are listed on the Almshouse website.

The residents

The aim of the Almshouse is to provide self-contained accommodation for older local people who are in acute housing need and are able to live independently. It does not offer health care but the managers help residents obtain the care services they need to live in their home as long as possible. Residents pay a weekly maintenance charge (WMC) for their accommodation and services. There is a separate weekly charge to cover the cost of electricity and water.



CHAPTER 2

Health and safety

Your doctor

If you do not have a GP ask the manager for a list of surgeries in the neighbourhood. The name of your GP must be given to the manager. You have the right to see your doctor or carer in confidence and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However if you have a chronic health condition it is advisable to tell the manager in case of an emergency. Anything you say will be kept in confidence within the charity.

Contact details

If you become ill or are in difficulties the manager

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will make every effort to contact on your behalf your next of kin, doctor, an ambulance or social services. Make sure you remember to inform the managers if your contact details change.

Fire precautions and drills

Compliance with standard fire regulations is frequently checked and fire drills take place regularly to ensure that every resident knows what to do in the event of a fire. The manager will explain this to you when you move in and show you how to operate the electrical equipment in your home.

All the flats are fitted with smoke detectors that trigger the fire alarm when necessary. Residents who are hard of hearing should ask for equipment to alert them to any emergency.

The evacuation procedure is as follows:

- Leave the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point located in the middle of the Almshouse lawn.
- Shut the door of your flat behind you and do not attempt to take any personal belongings with you.

Chapter 2 – Health and safety

- Wear warm clothing and leave your flat immediately.
- Do not attempt to put out the fire.

Please also take these precautions.

- Check at night or before going out that all appliances have been fully switched off.
- When smoking in your flat be sure to avoid falling asleep or being too close to curtains.
- Smoking in bed or in the common areas is strictly forbidden.
- Always use ash trays while smoking.
- Avoid smoking near others as the risk of passive smoking is now well recognised.
- Do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended.

Small appliances

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

Storage in communal areas

Residents must not store personal belongings

in any of the communal areas or on staircases as they could impede escape during a fire or cause someone to trip. Any personal belongings found in the communal areas will be removed.

Slips and falls

The trustees stress the need to be cautious when using the footpaths in wet or icy weather. While care is taken to keep them free of hazards we advise you to use the handrails.

Security

Always keep the front door of your house shut and your flat locked and remove the key from the lock when you are at home. Check that the front door to the house is securely shut after you or your visitors have come in or gone out.

Use the spy hole to identify people at the door. Do not allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. Residents on the ground floor should not leave windows open or keep cash and valuables at home.

Keys

The managers hold a master key to your front door but can use it only in emergencies or with

your permission. They will enter your home only if you ask them to do so, if you have given permission for work to be done in your absence or in an emergency.

You must not fit locks and chains without the trustees' consent as these might delay access for emergency services. If any unauthorised locks have to be removed you will be charged with the cost of removal. Chains should only be put on to identify callers before letting them in.

You must not obtain extra keys without permission from the trustees. If a key has to be given to a carer please give the managers the contact details of the person or company who have access. The manager or a police crime reduction officer can advise you on how to make your home more secure.

Water stopcocks

These are located under the main sink in each flat. The stopcock for the mains water supply to the South and West blocks is beside the door to flat 1. For the North block it is beside the door to flat 13C.

Legionnaires disease

The risk of contracting legionnaires disease in a

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domestic property is very low but it increases if water is not regularly used. Any hot or cold tap or shower that has not been used for seven days should be flushed through for at least two minutes once a week or on your return to the property. Avoiding splashing minimises the release of water droplets and aerosols. The toilet should also be flushed with the lid closed. Shower heads should be cleaned and disinfected regularly to prevent scale or algae build up.

Damp and mould

Damp and mould can occasionally occur in a home and are a significant health hazard. If you find damp and mould in your flat please inform the managers.

Electricity meter and fuse box

The electricity mains switch is to be found in the cupboard under the stairs in each house. The fuse box is in the hall of each flat.



CHAPTER 3

Terms of occupancy

Letter of Appointment

The Letter of Appointment you received when you were admitted to the Almshouse specifies that you are a beneficiary of the charity. This means you do not have the security of tenure that a tenancy offers and in exceptional circumstances the trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation. In practice, this occurs only when trustees believe they have no alternative.

Examples of such circumstances are:

- The resident is no longer able to live independently, even with the help of social

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services or family support

- The resident has consistently failed to pay the WMC without good reason
- A resident's behaviour, either towards other residents or members of staff, is deemed to be unreasonable or anti-social,
- The resident's circumstances have changed to the extent that he or she is no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary.

It is a condition of occupancy that you provide the charity with accurate details of your financial circumstances and that you inform the charity if these circumstances change. The charity would only set aside an appointment as a last resort after every effort had been made to resolve the issues.

A resident who has been asked to leave has the right to have the case heard in the County Court.

The weekly maintenance contribution (WMC)

This is payable in advance on the first of each month by direct debit or standing order. If you receive housing benefit arrangements can be made for it to be paid directly into the charity's account. If you are experiencing difficulties in claiming please let us know.

Chapter 3 – Terms of occupancy

If you are receiving housing benefit and fail to make two consecutive WMC payments the Almshouse can request direct payment.

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

- Building repairs and maintenance
- Servicing and repair of water and electrical systems
- Management costs
- Decoration costs
- Buildings insurance.

Council tax and services

In addition to the weekly maintenance contribution residents must pay their own council tax.

The cost of electricity and water is included as a service charge in the WMC and is not eligible for housing benefit. There is no gas on site. Please use electricity sensibly as it is not individually metered.

Residents' participation

The trustees hold regular meetings with the residents to discuss the running of the almshouses.

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You can also ask the manager to arrange a meeting with a trustee in private. Participation in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses benefits all concerned.

Trustees welcome the residents' views on matters that affect their quality of life at the almshouses.

They will consult residents before any work is done on their flats (except in an emergency) and before making changes to the communal facilities including the gardens

Absence from home

If you go away for an extended period please leave us your phone number and temporary address. If you return earlier than planned you should inform us as soon as you get home so that we know who is in residence in the event of an emergency.

Unusually long periods away could lead the trustees to conclude that you have less need for almshouse accommodation than others. If you plan to be away for more than 28 days in any year please explain the circumstances to the manager and request written permission.

Before you leave ensure that all food has been put away, taps and appliances have been fully switched off and windows shut. If you are absent during the winter months please make sure that the heating is left on at a low level to minimise the risk of burst pipes.

Home improvements

Any alterations, repairs or decoration to your home must be discussed with the manager in advance. 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 falls to the trustees. Since they are also responsible for the maintenance of the Almshouse they have to consider individual requests for alterations in relation to the general maintenance programme.

The request may not be approved if the trustees consider that an alteration would be structurally unsound, reduce amenities for new occupants or raise maintenance costs. As the almshouse is a listed building some alterations may also need prior local authority consent.

Business use

No part of the Almshouse, including the flats, the hall, other communal areas and the gardens, may be used as a place of business. The ban also applies to storing items connected with running a business.

Visitors

Visitors are not permitted to stay in a resident's flat except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the management. There is a guest room that visitors can use for a small charge.

Pets

Residents may keep no pets other than cats, caged birds and goldfish. Please advise the manager about arrangements you have made for the care of your pet if you are away or become ill.

Moving out

If you wish to leave the Almshouse you must contact the manager and give the trustees written notice of at least four weeks. During this notice period you will be liable for your WMC payments even if you have already moved out.

Residents who leave the almshouse without giving

notice would be liable for paying their WMC until the end of the notice period. WMC contributions and utility bills should be paid up to the departure date. Personal representatives of deceased residents are responsible for paying the WMC until vacated premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

Trustees have the right to start the process of setting aside the resident's appointment in the event of non-payment of WMC.

Changing flats

If you wish to move from one Almshouse flat to another please submit a request in writing to the manager. Every effort will be made to help you to move if there is availability but the decision rests with the trustees.

Occasionally the trustees may require you to move to another flat to make way for repair work or for some unforeseen reason. Your views will be taken into account and barring an emergency you will be given at least one months' notice.



CHAPTER 4

Services provided

The management

The manager and assistant manager are responsible for supporting the general wellbeing of residents as well as looking after the maintenance of the building and garden.

They cannot offer health care but they can liaise on your behalf with local health and social services to help you receive the assistance you need to remain safe and independent in your home. External agencies can provide help with personal care and hygiene, meal preparation, cleaning, shopping and the provision of physiotherapy and occupational therapy aides.

Chapter 4 – Services provided

In an emergency the managers will request help on your behalf and notify your family and friends.

The managers live off site. Details of the times when they are present can be obtained from the office. Please bear in mind that when they are off duty they should not be called to attend to routine matters which could be left until the following morning. In an emergency call the Camden Careline service.

The managers aim to watch over the health and welfare of residents without interfering or intruding on their privacy. It is their responsibility to make regular checks to see that all is well with the residents and we appreciate your help in enabling them to do this. Residents who do not wish to receive a regular visit or call may be asked to sign a disclaimer form. If the managers feel there would be a risk to the health and welfare of the individual or other residents, they may insist that such visits or calls are made.

Emergency call system

Residents will be shown how to use the emergency call system when they move in. It handles emergency calls for health, police, fire

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and ambulance and is for emergency calls only. When the managers are on duty they will deal with emergency calls. At other times the system is switched over to the Camden Careline Central Control and a helpline connects the resident to a call centre that is manned 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Please do NOT tie up the pull cords or leave the alarm button on your bedside table as it may be out of reach when you need to use it.

Guest room

Visiting friends and family are not permitted to stay in a resident's flat but there is a guest room that can be used by a relative or friend for a short stay (normally up to seven days). There is a small charge for this service.

If you want to use the guest room please give the manager as much advance notice as possible. Priority will be given to a friend or relative visiting a resident who is ill. Bed linen and towels are provided but the resident should launder them after the guest's departure and make sure the room is left clean and tidy.

Communal facilities

The Regnart Room hall is used by all residents and their visitors for social and recreational activities and by the trustees for their meetings. Residents can choose activities they wish to arrange for the benefit of other residents and can ask the managers for help and advice.

Laundry

The almshouse has a laundry room with a washing machine and tumble drier. It is for the residents only and its use may be restricted to ensure that neighbouring residents are not disturbed by the noise.

Furniture and fittings

The Almshouse flats are offered unfurnished but the trust is responsible for providing each flat with an under the counter fridge, induction hob, extractor fan and oven. It also provides the carpets and furniture in the Regnart Room.

Garden

The garden is for the enjoyment of all residents and should be used with consideration of others. While the manager arranges for an outside contractor to maintain the garden offers of help

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from residents to keep it looking attractive are always welcome.

No dogs are allowed in the garden and visitors must leave by 10pm.

Repairs and decorations

The trustees are responsible for external and internal repairs and decoration in resident homes and the communal areas. You should report all necessary work to the managers who will arrange for it to be inspected before work is carried out.

You will be consulted in advance about arrangements for the work to be carried out. Workers will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you and the manager have agreed. An exception will have to be made in the case of an emergency such as a water leak.

Insurance

The charity insures the building and its own contents. Residents have responsibility for insuring the contents of their own homes.

Television

You need a TV licence to watch or record live

Chapter 4 – Services provided

programmes on a TV set, video or DVD recorder, PC or mobile phone. This includes foreign broadcasts.

TV licence concessions are available to those who are blind or sight impaired. People aged 75 and over who receive pension credit are eligible for a free TV licence.

The Almshouse has a concessionary licence to which your details can be added. Please speak to the managers if you think you are eligible.

The Almshouse maintains a common television aerial. Other aerials or satellite dishes are not allowed.

Please be considerate to neighbours when watching television or listening to music and limit noise levels generally, particularly after 10.30pm.

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your flat clean, including the inside of the windows. If cleaning becomes difficult or you cannot clean windows safely, please advise the manager who will engage a window cleaner. There is likely to be a small

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charge for this. Residents will be advised if a contractor is coming to clean their windows.

Cleaning communal areas in the houses and the Regnart room is the responsibility of the charity and the cost forms part of the WMC.

Refuse collection and recycling

Refuse is normally collected on Monday and Thursday of each week. There are two large rubbish bins, one for recycling and one for general waste. You are responsible for taking your rubbish to the communal bins.

Telephones and broadband

Residents are responsible for arranging a telephone or broadband installation through their chosen providers.

Parking

There is no parking available on the site but residents may apply to Camden Council for a resident's permit to park in the bays on the road outside the Almshouse.



CHAPTER 5

General information

Please note some of the information below changes from time to time.

Council tax and council tax benefit

Residents are responsible for paying their 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%.

Residents whose income consists of the basic retirement pension and modest savings may be entitled to a reduction in council tax.

State Benefits

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no savings then you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Even if you do have income in addition to the basic retirement pension, you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs.

To claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit an application form can be obtained from the local benefits office (DWP) or local authority housing department. These offices must be informed of any changes in financial circumstances as they have the power to demand reimbursement in the event of an over-payment. If you are over state pension age you may also be entitled to pension credit

If you have a disability or difficulty performing daily tasks you may also be able to claim personal independence payment (PIP) or attendance allowance. These are not means tested.

Eligibility for state benefits changes from time to time. The managers can provide some advice on state benefits, and you can also obtain information from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK

Wills, gifts and legacies

Residents are strongly advised to make a will and to ask a solicitor for help with this.

It is the trust's policy that no one involved in its running should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you want to donate anything to the trust you should speak to the manager. All such matters will be dealt with in strict confidence.

Management should also be told where your will is kept, who your executor is and the names and contact details of your next of kin.

Lasting Power of Attorney

Residents may like to consider setting up a Lasting Power of Attorney. This allows them to appoint someone to look after their finances and to take welfare and healthcare decisions on their behalf in the event of mental incapacity.

Local organisations

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

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- Age UK Camden
- Citizens Advice Camden
- Camden Community Law Centre
- Camden Social Services

Details on how to contact these organisations can be found on their websites. The manager can also provide details of these and other local services for the elderly.

Social activities

The trustees encourage residents to take part in communal activities. Friendships grow and residents are more ready to support one another. We find that some residents enjoy such activities while others prefer to pursue their own interests. There is no pressure to take part in organised activities.

Social media

Residents using internet platforms such as Facebook and X are asked never to express views via social media about the charity, its trustees or other residents and staff.



CHAPTER 6

If things go wrong

Personal problems

If a resident has personal problems concerning money or other matters and has no family or friends they can consult the managers will try to help or offer advice. Such concerns will be treated in the utmost confidence.

Complaints

The trustees can only resolve problems and improve services if residents speak up when things go wrong. If a problem arises that cannot easily be resolved in discussion with another party the following procedure should be followed.

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Complaints about repairs, maintenance, other residents, health and safety or other matters should first be referred to the assistant manager. If they are not resolved then the next step is to write to the manager.

If the manager is not able to deal with a complaint satisfactorily, or if the complaint is about one of the managers, then a written complaint should go to the chairman of the trustees asking for it to be considered by the board of trustees. You would be entitled to attend the meeting at which the complaint is discussed and can be accompanied by a friend or professional adviser. After discussion of the complaint the trustees will write to the resident to explain what decision was made and what action is to be taken.



