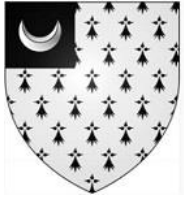


Shepton Mallet United Charities

www.alms1627.org.uk

SMUC/RH/103/10.24

HANDBOOK for RESIDENTS



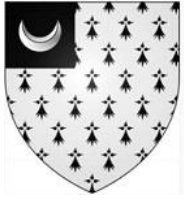
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1. Introduction

This handbook contains information about occupying your almshouse, about the charity and its management. If you are a new applicant, you should read it carefully before you sign the letter of appointment.

Your almshouse is offered to you with the aim of providing convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting which allows you to come and go as you please. As explained in the application form, applicants are appointed as beneficiaries of the charity, not as tenants. The trustees have no power to grant a tenancy and you do not have the same legal rights as a tenant or homeowner would have.

The charity hopes that the information in this handbook will help you to be comfortable here. We are happy to answer any questions that you might have, either via the Warden or the Clerk (see 'useful contact details on the last page of this handbook').

2. History of the charity

George and William Strode set up the original almshouse charity in 1627. In 1699, Edward Strode built two almshouses in Church Lane and set up the bread charity, continued by his daughter Elizabeth. In 1861, the charity was able to build four more almshouses and a bread room in Church Lane (later also converted to an almshouse). In 1864, Mary Ann Wickham left a legacy to build the two almshouses in Peter Street. In 2001, three modern bungalows at Milliner Court were purchased, providing the charity with the 12 almshouses it has today.

Shepton Mallet United Charities (SMUC) was established in 1909 amalgamating the Strode and Wickham charities and several smaller ones. Today it is a registered charity, number 1175666, as well as a registered social housing provider, number 5142.

3. The Board of Trustees

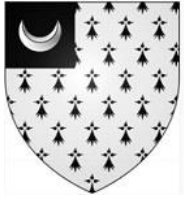
The charity is administered by up to twelve voluntary Trustees. They are supported by a part-time Warden, who visits each resident during each week day, as well as a part-time Clerk.

Trustees:	Mr P G H Davies (Chair)	Mr N G May (Treasurer)
	Mr V A C Owen (Vice Chair)	Mr G C Cockill (Vice Chair)
	Mr J M Rendel	Mrs S P Moore
	Mrs K A H Lovell	Mrs J M Dear
	Mr K R Taylor	Mrs S D Freeborn
	Mr N J Carter	Mr J J Pugsley

Warden:	Mrs J Pegrum	Clerk:	Mrs G Baker
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If you would like to talk to a Trustee in private, you can ask the Warden to arrange this. We welcome your views on the running of the almshouses and hold consultations from time to time. There is also a programme of annual visits: they are designed to give you an opportunity to share any concerns as well as a welfare check on both you and your home.

It is SMUC's policy that no-one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you do wish to donate anything to the charity please contact the Clerk to the Trustees: everyone involved will deal with your wishes in confidence.



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4. Terms of your occupancy

4.1 Letter of appointment

Your letter of appointment, which you signed when you were selected as a resident, gives valuable information about your terms of occupancy and you have been given a copy to keep for your records. The charity cannot ask you to leave unless there are exceptional circumstances (see 'moving out', section 7.)

4.2 Weekly Maintenance Contribution

You have agreed to pay a Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC), which is given in your letter of appointment. It helps to cover the costs of almshouse repairs and maintenance together with buildings insurance, officer salaries and other administrative costs associated with the running of the charity.

The WMC is due either weekly, every four weeks or monthly in advance (with arrears if any) and you should pay by standing order. If you receive Housing Benefit, arrangements can be made for it to be paid into the charity's account. If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, you will almost certainly be entitled to support to help with your housing costs: to claim, you should ask for a form at your local benefits office or housing department. Your Warden or a Trustee may be able to help if you need help with completing a claim form.

You will be given at least one month's notice of any change to your WMC.

4.3 Service bills

Each resident is responsible for paying their own Council Tax and water and sewerage rates: you will be told how to pay and about available benefits. You are also responsible for your gas and electricity bills: please let us know the name of your supplier(s) when you have set up your account(s). If the supply is disconnected for any reason, please tell the Warden at once. Neither gas nor electricity meters, nor their locks and fittings can be altered without first asking for permission from the charity. Please note:

When you move in, you will be shown where to find electricity mains and trip switches, water and gas stopcocks. It's important that you are able to access these at all times.

4.4 Contents of your almshouse

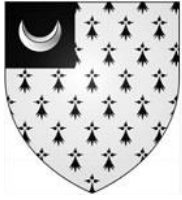
Your almshouse is provided to you unfurnished and you are responsible for providing white goods such as fridge, washing machine: however, a cooker will be provided for you unless you have asked not to have one. Electrical items are safety checked by the charity annually.

The almshouse will be internally decorated before you move in, with carpets and curtain rails provided.

4.5 Relatives and visitors

As already explained, it is a term of occupancy that you are capable of living independently: our Independent Living policy gives more details. We hope your relatives and friends will give you the same support as they would if you were living in any other housing: with their help and co-operation, we hope that you will be independent for as long as you can, perhaps with support from Social Services.

Your almshouse must be your permanent residence and you should not be away from it for more than 28 consecutive days in any year without SMUC's prior consent. If you plan to be away for more than 28 consecutive days, please ask for agreement from the Warden or directly from the Trustees. It may be advisable to leave your central heating on, on a low setting.



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Occasional overnight visitors are able to stay in the almshouse, with prior permission from the Trustees, as long as you are also present. You are responsible for your visitors at all times.

Please let the Warden know:

- if you plan to be absent overnight.
- if you have a relative or friend to stay and seek permission in advance if they will stay for more than three consecutive nights.

We need to know who is in the almshouses so that all residents may be accounted for in case of an emergency, for the safety and security of the whole community.

Please keep in mind that there is no car parking within the older buildings complex, but a pay and display car park is close at hand.

4.6 Improvements to your home

You must discuss any proposed improvements to your home with the charity first: the Warden will be able to put you in touch with the most appropriate Trustee. Permission might be refused if the plans could:

- Make the property structurally unsound.
- Be forbidden under Listed Building legislation.
- Reduce any amenities for future occupants.
- Increase future maintenance costs.

4.7 Pets

We understand that a pet can be a trusted friend and source of support but it isn't possible to give blanket approval. Trustee approval will be required but small animals will normally be acceptable. However, any pets must not be a nuisance to neighbours.

If you have been given permission for a pet(s), please tell the Warden about any arrangements you have made for their care if you are away or become ill.

5. Health and safety

Important: in case of fire dial 999 and make your way to a place of safety.

The Warden will also talk through fire safety with you when you move in, as well as explaining how everything in your home works, including central heating controls and trip switches.

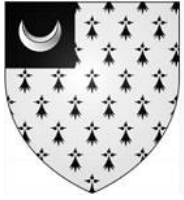
5.1 Do's and don'ts

Do:

- Keep your front door locked.
- 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 you are identifying callers but shouldn't be kept in permanent use.

Do not:

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity.



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- Fit locks and chains without the charity's consent as they may delay helpers in an emergency. Please ask for advice if you would like alternative security arrangements.
- Have extra keys cut without first asking permission, as this could endanger security.
- Smoke or vape inside your almshouse. This is important both for your own safety and the maintenance of the building.
- Keep more cash in your home than you need for day-to-day expenses. Please don't ask the Warden to take care of money for you as this is not allowed.
- Have paraffin, oil, Calor gas or radiant electrical heaters: these are not allowed. Electric radiators and fan heaters are regarded as safe and acceptable and must be used safely as SMUC and its insurers must take risk of fire very seriously. The Warden or the Trustees should be consulted if you need additional heating.
- Change the locks on your property.
- Remove batteries from smoke alarms.
- Install support equipment (grab handles, stair lifts etc) without seeking permission. Your property may be historic or listed, and special considerations might apply.

A master key, which can open your front door, is held in a keylock by the door, with a secure 4-digit pass code to open it. Access may be required, usually by the Warden, and she has instructions only to enter if you ask her to do so, if you have given permission for work to be done while you are away or in an emergency. Your privacy will be respected at all times. Please do not have extra keys cut without permission as this endangers security.

5.2 Medical matters

The Warden and the Clerk must have the name of your doctor so that help can be obtained in an emergency. You will have given us this information with your application form but please let us know if anything changes.

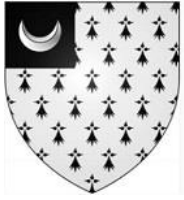
You have every right to see your doctor, nurse or other carer alone and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself. However, if you have chronic or major health problems, you may feel safer if the Warden knows about it so that any sensible actions can be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the Warden will be kept confidential unless it is important for us to keep a note. Our data protection policy is available on the charity's website or via the Warden.

If you are ill or in difficulties, the charity, particularly the Warden, will make every effort to get in touch with anyone on your behalf, such as relatives, friends, medical staff or Social Services. This is why we have asked for contact details for your doctor and relatives and friends, in the application form that you have filled in. If you are ill, particularly if you need to go to hospital, please let the Warden know.

If you have a disability or develop one while living in your almshouse, it may be possible to obtain equipment or even make some adaptations to help you to live an independent life: the Warden will be able to access advice for you. Please don't make any structural alterations to your home such as ramps or a stair lift without permission.

5.3 Personal matters

If you have any personal problems, whether about money or anything else, the charity will be glad to give whatever help or advice they can, particularly if you don't have a relative or friend you feel able to consult. The Warden can make arrangements for you to see a particular Trustee if you wish.



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You are strongly advised to make a will: it is essential if you wish to leave personal property to a relative or friend. Please tell the Warden where the Will is kept and who is the executor(s). A solicitor is the best person to help to make a will and the Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to point you in the right direction. Do ask the Warden if you find this difficult.

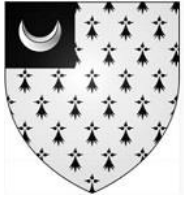
6. Responsibilities

6.1 The charity is responsible for:

- External maintenance and communal areas.
- The decoration and cleanliness of your almshouse before you move in, including the garden.
- Any structural repairs that are needed: please report any work that is needed to the Warden, who will arrange for it to be carried out: the charity will let you know when the work will start and how long it is likely to take. Workmen won't be allowed to enter when you are out unless you have agreed to suitable arrangements: an exception might be if the situation is urgent. Again, please don't let anyone into your almshouse unless you know who they are. There may be times, for example during extensive refurbishment, when SMUC will need to ask you to move (either temporarily or permanently) to another dwelling. SMUC reserves the right to do so, but only after full consultation with you.
- Insuring the buildings.
- The charity is legally required to carry out an annual inspection and service of all gas appliances.

6.2 As a resident, you are responsible for:

- Keeping your almshouse clean and in good repair after you move in. If this is difficult for you, please ask the Warden for advice.
- Maintaining your garden to a reasonable standard. Please don't let trees or shrubs grow large enough to cause a nuisance to others.
- Repairs and replacements of your own property.
- Setting up accounts for electricity and gas supplies. Each house has a thermostat that can be set at the temperature that suits you, but please make sure that it is not set so low that the house suffers with cold-related damp or mould.
- Insuring the contents of your home.
- Treating your neighbours, the Warden and the Trustees with courtesy and respect: you must occupy your property quietly and with thought for other residents and/or neighbours. Please be considerate with noise levels from televisions, radios, musical instruments etc. Nothing must be done in, upon or around the property which could be a nuisance or disturbance to others. Our formal policy on Anti-Social Behaviour is available on the charity's website or via the Warden.
- For residents over the age of 75 in receipt of Pension Credit, the television license is free <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/for-your-home/aged-74-and-over-aud3>. The charity may also be able to help younger residents to access a reduced licence fee, depending on the age of your almshouse. Please note that there are restrictions on the positions of aerials and satellite dishes if your almshouse has Listed Building status.
- With SMUC's permission, you may be allowed to work from your almshouse, but you must guarantee that this will not be disruptive for other residents and that it will not involve delivery or storage of items and/or visitors to the buildings.



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6.3 Refuse

Green wheeled bins are provided for non-recyclable rubbish and the brown wheeled bin is for garden waste. Boxes are also provided for recyclable items, as well as small brown kitchen caddies for food waste. Please make sure that the rubbish area is kept clean and tidy. The Warden can advise you about collection days.

6.4 Your Warden

The Warden watches over the health and welfare of residents without interfering in their lives or intruding on their privacy. In the morning the Warden will usually speak to everyone while walking round the almshouses, to check that there aren't any problems. Note: if residents do not wish to receive these regular visits, they may be asked to sign a form of disclaimer. Where the charity feels there would be a risk to the health and welfare of the individual or other residents, they may have to insist that such visits are accepted.

7. Moving out

If you wish to leave your almshouse, you must give the charity written notice of at least four weeks: either post or email is acceptable, to the Clerk to the Trustees (contact details on the last page of this handbook).

During the four week notice period, you will still be liable for your WMCs, even if you have already moved out. Residents or, in the sad event of death their personal representatives, are responsible for the contribution until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

In certain circumstances, the charity may ask you to find alternative accommodation. These are:

- You do not comply with the rules set out in your letter of appointment or elsewhere, such as this handbook. These rules are made for the benefit of all residents: please comply with them.
- A change in your financial circumstances which invalidates the basis for your original appointment means that you are no longer eligible. For example, you could win or inherit a significant sum of money.
- You may no longer be able to look after yourself, even with the help of your family and Social Services. There may come a time when this is putting you and the other residents at risk. The charity's policy on Independent Living gives more information and is available on the charity's website or via the Warden.

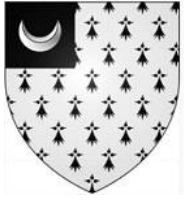
The charity will only set aside the appointment (asking you to find other accommodation) as a last resort, after a fair process of investigation and warning. You will be given as much time and help as possible to find alternative accommodation.

You may wish to move to a different almshouse with SMUC and you are welcome to apply to the Clerk for your wish to be considered.

8. Our policies

Our charity has a range of formal, written policies that relate to you and your occupancy of your almshouse:

- Anti-social behaviour.
- Safeguarding.
- Equality and diversity.
- Complaints.
- Independent living.
- Data Protection (also see 8, below).



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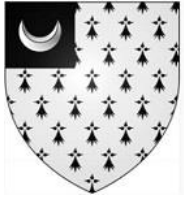
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They should be read along with this handbook as they support the relationship between you as the resident and Shepton Mallet United Charities. They are available on the charity's website or via the Warden.

9. Privacy statement

The information that you give to us will not be used for any purpose other than for helping the Trustees to consider your application, to manage your residency and to handle any of your issues. For more information about how SMUC handles your data, please ask to see our 'data protection policy', which gives full information about your rights under General Data Protection Regulations or GDPR.

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USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE	999
NHS Direct (medical non emergency)	111
POLICE (non emergency)	101
Electricity loss of supply	105
Gas loss or leak	0800 111999

Doctors

Grove House	01749 342314
Park Medical Practice	01749 334383
Community Hospital	01749 342931
Care Direct (Somerset)	0300 123 2224
Boots Chemist, Park Practice	01749 334383
Boots Chemist, Townsend Retail Park	01749 346953
Shepton Pharmacy	07895 504441
Tesco Pharmacy	0345 671 9389

General

Housing Benefit Office: your local authority hub is based at Somerset Council, see below.

Somerset Council (formerly Mendip DC)	0300 123 2224
Shepton Mallet Town Council	01749 343984
Citizens Advice Bureau	0808 278 7842
Social Services	0300 123 2224
Age UK office	01823 345613
Crimestoppers	0800 555111

Shepton Mallet United Charities

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