

BEDFORD, MORISON AND CORDERY ALMHOUSES
St Mary's Close, George Street, Watford. WD18 0EQ

Charity 207042



RESIDENT'S HANDBOOK AND
CONDITIONS OF RESIDENCY

Approved by Trustees, April 2024

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This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees:

Name: Felicity Evans MBE, Chair of Trustees

Date: April 2024

HISTORY, GOVERNANCE and MANAGEMENT

1.1 Historical Notes

The Bedford Almshouses were opened on *21 February 1580* by Francis Russell, the Second Earl of Bedford and his wife, Lady Bridget widow of Sir Richard Morison, and were founded for eight poor women to be chosen from the Ancient Parishes of Watford, Langley and Chenies. Built of timber and plaster, the Almshouses are individual dwellings. The Bedford Almshouses are the oldest dwellings in Watford and are Grade II listed. They continue to provide charitable housing for the elderly as a charitable Trust. The Almshouses had extensive gardens at the front and rear of each house, the front reaching the boundary of St Mary's Church. In 1771 the Church applied for more burial land and in 1772 the houses lost their front gardens.

In 1928 the houses deteriorated, due to lack of funds for repairs, and were targeted for demolition. However, in 1932 due to the generosity of the people of Watford the houses were fully repaired. In the 1960s the front doors of the cottages were sealed and the original sculleries made into kitchenettes. More recently, bathrooms/showers have been installed to further modernise the properties. Owing to the age of the Almshouses, there is an ongoing repair and maintenance programme and in recent years the roof has undergone extensive repair, new fire walls have been built in the lofts affording extra protection against fire spreading aggressively and the lofts have been insulated. As the buildings are Grade II listed all repair work has to be sanctioned by the local council conservationist.

In his will dated 1919 Frederick Cordery donated six further Almshouses to the Trust. In the 1960s four Almshouses in Vicarage Road and six Almshouses in Sutton Road (The Cordery Almshouses) were demolished and in compensation a red brick block of studio flats was erected opposite the eight cottages. The new block houses ten residents and also contains a Site Management Office and visitor's suite.

In addition to her part in establishing Almshouses Dame Mary Morrison also set up an Apprenticeship Trust in 1629 to aid and assist young persons during their educational years, and this Trust is still administered by the Trustees with annual awards being given.

1.2 Constitution

The Trust is a registered charity governed by a Charity Commission Scheme; the charity number for the Bedford, Morison and Cordery Almshouses is 207042 and for the Dame Mary Morrison Apprenticeship Trust is 312128.

1.3 Management

The Trust is governed by a board of voluntary Trustees. The Board of Trustees constitutes eight Trustees, an ex Officio Trustee; two Nominative Trustees and five Co-optative Trustees. The Charity manages unfurnished dwellings which are provided for single men or women, over the age of 60 years; over the age of 60 years, of reduced income, who have been resident in the Ancient parishes of Watford (urban and rural), Oxhey, Langley or Chenies for most of their lives and who do not own a property.

CONDITIONS OF RESIDENCY

2.1 Suitability for Residency

The Bedford, Morison and Cordery Almshouses offer accommodation to single men and women over the age of 60 who are capable of independent living. The community is close-knit with a number of social events organised during the year where residents can come together and socialise. Residents are therefore expected to maintain an acceptable level of personal hygiene. Residents must abide by professional medical advice regarding the taking of medication and, where necessary, hospitalisation. Residents are also expected to keep their residence clean and reasonably tidy to avoid the possibility of either a health or safety or fire hazard to them or other residents or to visitors (including maintenance workers) to the Almshouses. Provided you abide by the Conditions of Residency, you may expect to continue living in residence indefinitely as long as you are well enough to do so.

It is your responsibility to read these terms and conditions and sign the Conditions of Residency on the last page of this document. If you do not understand any point, you must discuss the issue with either the Site/Deputy Site Warden or a Trustee as, in the event of a breach of the terms of your residency, it will not be accepted as a means of defence if you declare you do not understand any phrases used.

Residents occupy their property as a Licensee of the Trustees; technically, therefore, residency is not a "Secure Tenancy" under the Housing Act of 1980. You are known as residents and you do not pay rent, but rather you pay maintenance charges.

Six months after your residency starts you will be invited to a review with representatives of the Trustees. The aim will be to understand and resolve any concerns each party may have concerning the residency.

2.2 Termination of Residency

Residents are asked to occupy the residency quietly demonstrating respect and thoughtfulness towards fellow residents.

Under the regulations of the Charity's Scheme residents may be asked to leave the Almshouse if a condition under this section is contravened more than once or several conditions are contravened once.

- To have knowingly made a false statement on the application form.
- To be in receipt of an income from a property owned by Resident.
- If the Resident brings the Charity into disrepute through being arrested, charged and convicted or cautioned by the Police.
- If the Resident uses or brings drugs that are classified as illegal on to the Charity's property.
- Insobriety that results in improper conduct towards another Resident or disruption to the residences.
- Improper conduct towards another Resident(s) which includes assault and or abusive language or behaviour.
- If the Resident uses residence or any part of the Charity's property for work.

If a Resident's health deteriorates to a condition that renders them unable to live independently and/or in need of ongoing social care support for day-to-day living, Trustees, including either the Chair or Vice Chair, will consider the situation, asking for further professional assessment, e.g. medical evidence, or social worker assessment etc. when appropriate and possible, to ensure full understanding of the circumstances. Any decision to withdraw the Almshouse accommodation will be fair and transparent and made alongside next of kin, to achieve proper move on arrangements.

If you choose to vacate the Almshouses you must give one month's notice to the Trustees in writing. If you vacate without giving notice residents are still liable to pay the weekly maintenance charge (WMC) for one month and until all personal items are cleared from the property. In the event of death, the WMC must be paid until the property has been cleared by the next of kin or nominated person.

2.3 Weekly Maintenance Contribution

Your weekly maintenance contribution includes the supply of water (hot and cold), central heating and external lighting.

- Payment can be made either by bank standing order or by cheque (made payable to the Bedford Almshouses) to the Site/Deputy Site Warden.
- Standing Orders should, preferably be scheduled for payment every 4 weeks.
- Cheques are due for payment Mondays*.
- The Trustees will review the maintenance payments on a Annual basis and, if appropriate, the fees will normally be increased from July each year. You will be given one months' notice of any increase.
- Maintenance payments are payable in advance.
- Arrears of payment could result in the Termination of Residency under section 2.2 of the conditions Residency.

*excluding Bank Holidays when maintenance will be paid on Tuesday or Wednesday.

2.4 Fire, Health and Safety Issues

Residents are responsible for insuring their personal effects and goods.

The Fire Brigade strongly recommend that every year the Trustees arrange for an electrician to conduct electrical (called PAT) testing on your electrical appliances that have passed their guarantee date. The fee for this check is paid by the Trustees.

2.4.1 Safety

Residents are expected to keep your residence clean and tidy in order to avoid the possibility of a safety or health hazard (including vermin) to you or other residents or visitors to the Almshouses due to lack of cleanliness.

- The amount of furniture and personal belongings you bring into the Almshouses, either at the beginning or during your residency, has to be limited to an amount that does not constitute either a fire hazard or restricts access for the emergency services which include fire, medical and police.

- Structural, plumbing or electrical alterations should not be made without prior permission of the Trustees.
- You are encouraged to make full use of the door chains.
- You are encouraged to display a sign in your door 'Identity must be provided' before you give access to persons unknown to you.

2.4.2 Fire

Residents are expected to keep their residence clean and tidy in order to avoid the possibility of a fire hazard to you or other residents or visitors to the Almshouses due to lack of cleanliness.

- The use of paraffin heaters is absolutely forbidden.
- Smoking is prohibited within every residency.
- Fire blankets are installed in every kitchen and the Trustee responsible for Fire, Health and Safety will demonstrate their use, if asked to do so by you or your next of kin.
- Smoke alarms and heat detectors are fitted to all properties; you should check these monthly. If unsure how to do so, the Site/Deputy Site Warden will show you.
- Smoke alarms fitted in the lofts are connected to a fire alarm in the main room of the residence and the batteries in the loft are self-charging.
- Fire evacuation procedures are displayed in your residency. The Site/Deputy Warden or the Trustee responsible for the Fire Health and Safety procedures will respond to queries and explain the fire alarm system. Fire drills will be conducted twice a year and unless you are absent from site, attendance is compulsory. It is important the procedures are followed during the fire tests and in the event of a real emergency.

2.4.3 Health

- 'Message in a bottle' is a free system to keep a list of your current medication in the event of an emergency. A specific sticker is displayed in your door window to indicate your participation. The bottle is normally kept in the fridge as this is a quick and safe location for the emergency services and will assist them should they be called out to attend you. Please speak to the Site/Deputy Warden if you would like to participate.
- An emergency call system ('Careline') can be provided to those who wish and I recommended if you have a medical condition, either when your residency starts or your health changes during your residency. This includes, for example heart conditions, stroke victims, diabetics or your health has deteriorated. It is recommended you wear it all the time you are at home. If you are in doubt about whether it is appropriate for you, speak to the Trustees.
- Those who choose to use Careline should wear the wristband or pendant at all times to ensure help can be summoned when needed

2.5 The Site / Deputy Warden

The role of the Site / Deputy Warden is to provide support to the residents and to assist in the good management of the Almshouses. As the Site / Deputy Warden acts on behalf of the Trustees we ask for your co-operation in treating them with respect. In addition we have a Bursar who assists with financial and organisational aspects of the running of the Almshouses.

The Site/Deputy Warden and/or the Bursar will:

- Perform administrative duties as requested by the Trustees which includes recording your maintenance contributions.
- Co-ordinate certain activities on site; e.g. scheduling tradesmen who are visiting site for scheduled maintenance work.
- Give you prior notice of tradesmen requiring entry to your residence for repair or maintenance. You will be notified as soon as the date is scheduled with the tradesman.
- Give tradesmen access to your residence unless you request that another resident grants access.
- Call a doctor or ambulance on your behalf.
- Contact your next of kin in the event of an emergency.

The Site/Deputy Warden will not:

- Do your housework or other personal activities you may require; except by private and confidential arrangement between you and the Site/Deputy Warden.
- Engage Social Services or Welfare on your behalf; that is your or your next of kin's responsibility.
- Provide regular attendance or nursing care for you.

If the Site/Deputy Warden is not available (for example due to holiday or sickness) you will be notified of an alternative contact.

The Site/Deputy Warden are not available outside normal working hours that are 09.00 - 17.00 hrs, except in the event of an emergency. The use of Careline should be considered outside these hours. During normal working hours the Site/Deputy Warden may not be on-site and contact can be made via their mobile phone; a notice will be displayed on the door of flat number 19 showing who is on duty and the mobile number on which they can be contacted.

2.6 Subletting and Sharing Occupancy

Residents may not sublet their residence. Residents may not share the occupation of their residence with any person other than a guest staying overnight.

2.7 Overnight Visitors

The Site/Deputy Warden **must** be given prior notice if you invite a visitor to stay overnight. This is not intended to interfere with your personal life but as a safety precaution in the unfortunate event of an emergency or disaster. If the decision is made outside the Site/Deputy Site Warden normal working hours, leave a message on the Duty Warden's mobile phone (number displayed on the door of number 19).

If preferable and with prior agreement with the Site/Deputy Warden arrangements can be made for your visitors to stay in flat number 19. The accommodation offers one bedroom with a single bed and a single fold up bed; lounge; bathroom and a kitchenette that offers cooking (electric oven, grill, hob and microwave) facilities. A fridge for storing food is also available as is cutlery and pottery.

The Trustees request a nominal contribution of £10.00 per night per person.

2.8 Keys

The Site Management Office holds a duplicate set of keys for all residences which are locked away in safe keeping. Please do not obtain extra keys without the agreement of the Trustees. However, you are encouraged to leave a set of keys with a nominated resident who can give access under your instruction.

The Site / Deputy Warden will use them in the event:

- You ask them to do so
- You have given permission for work to be done in your absence
- In an emergency

2.9 Holidays and Absence

Residents should advise the Site/Deputy Site Warden:

- If you plan to be away overnight or for a longer period. You must also indicate your proposed return date. If the decision is made outside the Site/Deputy Site Wardens normal working hours, leave a message on the Duty Warden's mobile phone (number displayed on the door of number 19).
- If you intend to vacate your dwelling for more than 28 consecutive days; in such instances you must pay the maintenance contribution in advance.

2.10 Transfer of Residency

Internal transfers are agreed by the Trustees in exceptional circumstances and then only on condition that no additional cost is incurred by the Trustees.

2.11 TV Licence

A Television Group Licence is held by the Trustees to cover named residents over the age of 60 years. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to keep the Group Licence details up-to-date. The Group Licence is not available for residents who work more than 15 hours per week, irrespective of age.

2.12 Maintenance and Repair of the Almshouses

The Trustees are responsible for general internal and external maintenance of the properties and to a greater degree than is required of them under the Housing Acts. The Trustees, on a yearly basis, agree an annual schedule of work.

The Bedford Almshouses built in 1580 were listed in the Inventory of the Historical Monuments of Hertfordshire (1910) in *August 1952* were scheduled as Grade II Listed Buildings (List Entry number 1101119). The listing includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building. Therefore no internal or external alterations are allowed without proper consent. Any proposed alterations or fixtures must be discussed with the Trustees and this includes decorating inside and outside.

The Trust must ensure listed building consent for all work to a listed building that involves alterations, extensions or demolition and will affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. The local authority will expect the listed building consent application to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the work you are planning. Such permissions can only be requested by the Trustees and not by Residents themselves. The requirement applies to all types of work and to all parts of the house covered by the listing if its special interest will be affected.

When the Trustees agree for contractors to work on site, you will be notified as soon as the date has been agreed. It is important to note that the Site/Deputy Warden are advised as soon as the date is agreed between the contractor and Trustees. This should be at least a week, however on some occasions contractors may become available before the agreed date and the Trustees may take advantage of this. It is expected of residents that, on these rare occasions, the change of schedule is respected. Emergency work will be completed as needed. If you are not available the Site/Deputy Warden will give access to contractors.

If as a resident you encounter any maintenance issues then your first contact is one of the on-site wardens, who can act or advise as appropriate.

If it is an **urgent issue**, such as loss of power or water leak, the wardens will act after consulting with a Trustee to have the issues addressed as fast as is possible. Please isolate any water or electrical circuits, or take appropriate actions to minimise damage. Please do not put yourself at risk whilst doing so.

If it is a **less urgent issue**, please contact the wardens and they will guide you through the filling out of a Maintenance Request form, which is kept in the office. These are assessed and collated where possible in to batches of work, so that an appropriate maintenance person can attend site and carry our work at several properties on the same visit. Such a form should be filled out for urgent works as well, but usually after the immediate issues have been addressed. We use these forms to not only record and track requests – and then initiate needed works, but also to reconcile invoices and note completion, so that we have a professional record of all previous works on your property and the site.

The wardens, bursar or maintenance Trustee will usually discuss the item with you and keep you informed of maintenance visits – and be able to allow access, with your permission, in your absence.

2.13 Clothes Lines

Clothes lines are available for Residents use. Normally the clothes line in front of or near your residence will be available to you. However, you do not own exclusive use of this line. Residents are not allowed to use their clothes line on Sunday in respect of the religious connections the Charity has with the Church.

2.14 Trustee Visits

Residents will be visited in their homes by two Trustees after they have settled in and thereafter from time to time. This is an opportunity to get you know you better and to address any issues and/or concerns. A mutually convenient time will be arranged beforehand.

2.15 Parking

- The car park is available for visitors (including your guests), tradesmen, Trustees and emergency services.
- Residents do not have automatic right to park in the car park; permanent parking is not allowed unless written permission is received from the Trustees. The Trustees will take into account any health issues before giving permission.
- Resident's guests must display a pass (available from the Site/Deputy Warden) showing the number of your residence; this is in the event they are blocking another vehicle or emergency access is needed.
- Your visitors must not leave their vehicle in the car park unless they are visiting you. Free parking for your visitors to have extended time away from your residence for personal business or pleasure is not permitted.
- Cars that are left whilst the owners are not on site may be removed if they block other vehicles in and the owner may be refused use of this private facility in the future.
- Parking must start at the back of the car park and work forward when possible.
- The yellow box markings must be kept clear.
- Priority will be given to the Site/Deputy Site Warden and Trustees (when attending on business).

2.16 Pets

Pets are not allowed to be kept on site by the residents.

2.17 Change of Personal Circumstance

Residents must inform the Site/Deputy Site Warden (either verbally, by telephone or a written note) if any of your circumstances change; this includes your health, your contact telephone number, your next of kin and your doctor. Non-compliance will be deemed to be a breach of a Condition of Residency.

2.18 Employment

Neither the Almshouses nor the gardens can be used as a place of business, either to conduct business or to store items connected with the running of a business.

2.19 Photographs

Each resident must agree to have their photograph taken. This will be held securely with other personal data and will only be shared with the emergency services when necessary in the event of a serious incident affecting the resident(s) concerned.

2.20 Data Protection

The Trustees are committed to ensuring that your privacy is protected and that there is strict adherence to the provisions of all relevant Data Protection legislation. Only data necessary for the efficient running of the Bedford Morison and Cordery Almshouses is collected and this is held securely to prevent access by unauthorised persons.

GDPR statement

The Bedford Morison and Cordery Alms-house Trust are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and are committed to ensuring the security and protection of the personal information that we hold, and to provide an effective and compliant approach to data protection. Both paper and computerised records may be kept. We may hold sensitive personal information including information relating to ethnicity, physical or mental health or condition, and or criminal records as well as personal financial information relating to the payment of the Maintenance fee.

We retain information regarding Residents and their next of kin so as to support them in their residence and all such data is destroyed 12 months after leaving the Almshouse residence. The information will not be disclosed to a third party without the Residents knowledge and consent. It will not be used for marketing purposes.

TRUSTEES AND SITE / DEPUTY WARDENS

Trustees

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Dr Nigel Ineson (Vice Chair)

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The Vicar of St Mary's (Ex-Officio)

Rev Richard Banham

Ms Marilyn Devonish

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Site Wardens - Mr Michael Musk and Ms Adeline Ouro-Gnao

Contact number for Duty Warden – 07957 945718

Bursar - Mr Carson Murphy

bursar@watfordbmcalmshouses.org.uk

Postal address (Office) - Bedford, Morison and Cordery Almshouses, 19 St Mary's Close, George Street, Watford WD18 0EQ.

Site addresses - all residences have the same post code WD18 0EQ.