

LANGLEY UNITED CHARITIES SO, YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT AN ALMSHOUSE?

Langley United Charities operates 21 almshouses in Langley. Some of these dates back to the early 17th Century, others are flats and bungalows which were built in the second half of the twentieth century. All benefit from a rolling programme of restoration and modernisation aimed at providing top quality accommodation for all residents as part of a community. The majority of accommodation is on a single site to the north of St Mary's Church in St Mary's Road, with the three oldest houses, the Kedermister Cottages, situated just to the south of St Mary's Church, a short walk away. Residents benefit from the services of a Warden and communal laundry facilities. The Dupree Lodge offers guest accommodation and can be booked should residents want to have friends or relatives to stay. Resident accommodation is provided at a cost well below market rent and it is hardly surprising that there is normally a waiting list. Becoming a resident of the Langley Almshouses is not the same as signing a tenancy agreement because of the charitable nature of the organisation. Residents of almshouses occupy under licence as beneficiaries of the charity with permission of the trustees.

Before completing an application form, it is worth considering a few points:

Almshouses exist for people in need of affordable housing: The original almshouses were designed to provide housing for retired agricultural labourers and whilst the demographics of our typical resident might have changed, the basic principles have not. Applications are only considered from those who do not own a property or have the means to do so. The application form will ask detailed questions about income, assets and savings and it is important to answer honestly. Residents will be expected to tell the trustees if their financial situation changes significantly and there might be cases where, perhaps as a result of a large inheritance or a lottery win, a resident would no longer be in need and so would no longer be eligible for an almshouse.

Almshouses are designed to be a main residence: The vast majority of our applicants are seeking an almshouse as their permanent home. As mentioned previously, the almshouses are to provide housing for those in need and the trustees have a duty to ensure that this happens. If you are proposing to spend long periods of time away from home, whether travelling abroad or staying with friends or family, an almshouse probably isn't right for you. All residents must inform the warden if they are going away and to seek the permission of the trustees if their time away is greater than 35 days a year.

Almshouses are intended as housing for the residents only: Applications are welcomed from individuals and couples. In the case of couples, both would be expected to be over 55 years of age and to fulfil the financial criteria. Whilst the Dupree Lodge can be booked to provide overnight accommodation for friends or family members on a brief visit, your almshouse accommodation is for your exclusive use. Friends, family members or even partners whom you meet subsequently after accepting residence have no entitlement to stay in this accommodation. Adult children need to understand that this will not constitute a family home. If you are

uncertain that accepting the offer of residency on this basis is right for you then you should consider whether you would be happy in an almshouse.

Langley United Charities' Almshouses are intended for retired people and for those approaching retirement: Whilst a number of our residents do indeed work, our community is a senior one and there is a need to recognise this. Almshouse residents are not expected to be using their almshouse or any other part of the complex for commercial activity or for financial gain. Car parking is very limited and is on a first come, first served basis. There is no capacity for residents to store work vehicles or the tools of their trade on the complex.

Almshouse residents are joining an established community: One of the great strengths of almshouse living in Langley is that our residents are joining a community which has a continuous tradition dating back over four hundred years. Many residents have forged firm friendships and we are seeking to develop this community spirit. First and foremost, all residents need to realise that they are living in close proximity to others and so there are responsibilities to each other in terms of noise and respecting the privacy of others as well as maintaining harmonious relations with all other residents. There is a clear expectation that residents will refrain from illegal activity and that neither they nor their guests will be a nuisance to others. Unfortunately, pets are inappropriate in such a setting. Many residents go beyond these basic expectations and find that they have something positive to offer the community and examples of this in the past have included gardening and organising theatre trips. Social events are organised for residents and the trustees are keen to give residents a say in decision making about future developments.

Living in an almshouse is not the same as renting privately: Almshouse residents do not pay "rent", they pay a "weekly maintenance payment" which is currently well below market rents in the area. This is because they are living in accommodation provided by a charitable trust. As a result, the **Trustees**, who are all unpaid volunteers, have a responsibility not just to maintain the fabric of the buildings and to keep them in good order but also to ensure that all residents continue to be eligible for an almshouse and that the community continues to be cohesive and vibrant. In exceptional circumstances, if a resident fails to meet eligibility criteria or to follow the rules and expectations of the community, they could be asked to leave the community.

A local connection is preferred: Whilst we welcome applications from all those who meet our financial criteria, preference is given to those who have a local connection, those who have lived in or around Langley at some time in their lives.

If you have any further questions before filling in the application form then please contact the trustees.