



ABSTRACT

A brief guide to your time in the Almshouse on Crown Street together with information you will find useful

DUNTON'S ALMSHOUSES RESIDENTS HANDBOOK

Resident's Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome to Dunton's Almshouses in Dedham. This handbook is intended to provide basic essential information about the charity, its governance and policies, and the mutual responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and you as a beneficiary of the charity. Please do not hesitate to speak to the *Clerk* or *Official Visitor* if you need any 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 you would be notified in good time before any such changes are made, to give you the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The almshouse is your home. 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.

The Trustees have tried to minimise rules and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all and to ensure the efficient management of the Trust.

History

In 1517, Stephen Dunton generously donated seven houses on Crown Street, Dedham, to support seven local people in need. This charitable act was further supported in 1571 when William Littlebury added to the original endowment.

By 1806, the original houses were replaced with ten new ones, later reconfigured into nine self-contained homes. These historic properties have continued to play a vital role in providing housing within the Dedham community ever since.

Over the years, the homes have been carefully maintained and modernized to include individual kitchens and bathrooms. However,

as Grade II listed buildings located within the Dedham Conservation Area, there are some restrictions on changes to the exterior structure.

[About the Charity](#)

Duntons Almshouses charity is officially registered with the Charity Commission. Our primary aims are to provide homes for people aged 60 and over who are in housing need and have lived in the local vicinity for 5 or more years. When a vacancy becomes available, all applications are carefully considered. The Trustees look at each person's connection to Dedham, their age, and their housing situation at the time of applying.

There is also a small linked charity called **The Reverend Jones Charity**, which is managed by the same Trustees. It was set up in 1909 using money left in a will. Originally, it helped provide warm clothing each November for the residents of Dunton's Almshouses.

Although most of the fund has been used over the years, a small amount remains. The Trustees may still use it from time to time to support residents, based on individual needs and their discretion.

[Management and Governance](#)

The Charity is overseen by a Board of Trustees made up of local volunteers who have a strong interest in the provision of social housing. Each Trustee brings relevant knowledge, experience, and skills to support the effective management of the Charity. A list of current Trustees is provided in Appendix 1.

The Board normally meets every three months, with additional meetings arranged if required. At each meeting, the *Official Visitor* presents a report on residents' wellbeing, raises any concerns or issues brought forward by residents, and seeks the Board's approval for any requests, repairs, or maintenance work that may be needed.

The *Clerk* to the Board of Trustees provides regular financial reports. Each December, the Board agrees a budget for the following 12 months, including any proposed changes to residents' maintenance

contributions. The Charity's accounts are independently audited each year and, together with a detailed report on the Charity's activities, are submitted to the Charity Commission.

Every five years, the Charity commissions an independent inspection of the properties. This produces a report identifying any required works, which are then considered and acted upon following discussion at Board meetings. The next inspection is scheduled for summer 2028.

The Dunton's buildings are fully insured through a specialist insurer experienced in covering almshouses and similar schemes nationwide. Please note that the Trust **does not insure residents' personal belongings or the contents of individual Almshouses**

Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

The Letter of Appointment of which you have a copy, is personal to you and explains that you occupy the almshouse as the beneficiary of the charity. This means that neither you or any relation or guest of yours is a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers. No other person is allowed to live at the property unless they have formally applied to the charity and been granted beneficiary status in their own right such that you have been jointly allocated the same dwelling.

In exceptional circumstances the Trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave. In practice this occurs very rarely when Trustees believe they have no alternative. Examples of such circumstances are: if a resident is unable to look after him or herself safely or to live independently, even with the support of family and/or social care services; if a resident consistently fails to pay Maintenance Contributions on a regular basis without good reason; if a resident's behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social towards other residents and/or the wider community; if a resident's circumstances change significantly to the extent that the provision of an almshouse is no longer needed; if a resident fails to comply consistently with the rules and regulations made by the charity detailed within this handbook and in your Letter of Appointment; if a resident provided false or misleading information in his/her application to be appointed a beneficiary of the charity.

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. The charity may review residents' financial circumstances from time to time. However, residents are assured that only in the most unusual circumstances would this lead to someone being asked to leave.

Maintenance Contributions

Maintenance Contributions are payable in advance by standing order or direct debit on a date agreed with you at the time of your Letter of Appointment. If you receive Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance from the local authority, arrangements it may be possible

for your Housing Benefit to be paid directly into the charity's bank account.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. The level of the Maintenance Contributions is reviewed annually but the charity reserves the right to review this more frequently if it is in the charity's best interests.

Central heating, electricity and hot water

In addition to the Maintenance Contribution, residents are responsible for paying their own gas and electricity bills. Utility meters will be read before you move in.

For safety reasons, residents must not use any heating appliances that have not been supplied by the Charity. This includes portable gas heaters and portable electric heaters, which present a serious fire and safety risk. The use of paraffin oil heaters is strictly prohibited.

Heating and hot water is provided from a combi-boiler with an adjustable timer and central thermostat. Each radiator is fitted with a thermostat which enables residents to adjust the temperature as required.

Consulting Residents.

The Trustees welcome residents' views on any matters affecting the quality of the almshouses, which should be discussed in the first instance with the *Official Visitor*. You can also talk to a Trustee in private if you wish by asking the *Clerk* to arrange this. You will always be consulted before any work is carried out on your almshouse (except in an emergency) and be advised of any changes to the Maintenance Contributions in reasonable time.

The Role of the Official Visitor.

The role of the *Official Visitor* is to ensure the smooth day to day running of the Charity. This includes regular visiting to make sure that the condition of the properties are maintained in good order and to take appropriate action in a timely fashion if any repairs etc. are needed; to be assured of the overall health and well-being of each

resident and to offer advice and guidance if required; and finally to provide reports to the Board of Trustees on all of the above at their quarterly meetings.

[Repairs, decorations and alterations to your Home](#)

Any repairs to the property needed that arise outside of our regular inspections and reviews (including faults to the heating/hot water systems) should be reported to the *Official Visitor* who will make the necessary arrangements for repairs to be undertaken.

You must not carry out any internal or external improvements, alterations, repairs or decoration, plumbing or electrical installations to your home without the prior permission of the trustees. No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed without prior consent from your discussions with the *Official Visitor* who will raise your request with trustee's.

As the trustees have responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the almshouses, they must 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. As you live in a listed building, some alterations will need local authority consent before any work can be carried out.

[Absence from Home.](#)

You are expected to be in full time occupation of your almshouse. Extended periods away during the year might lead the Trustees to conclude that you have less need for almshouse accommodation than others. Residents must live in the almshouse as their permanent home and not be absent for more than 28 consecutive days in any year without prior consent of the charity. If you go away for any period, then please notify the *Official Visitor* and provide them with a contact telephone number. It is important to know who is away, especially in any emergency e.g. a fire at the property.

Visitors – Family and Friends

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

Where permission is granted, occasional overnight stays only will be permitted but these must not be regular occurrences. It is vital that trustees are aware of any overnight visitors for safety and security reasons.

Pets

The trustees will have explained their policy on pets to you at interview and before you moved in. Due to the size and situation of the almshouses residents no pets of any description are allowed.

Gifts and Legacies.

It is the charity's 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*. Any such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Re-housing.

Should the almshouse no longer be appropriate to meet your housing needs, if you wish to move for any other reason or if you are anticipating a move then this should first be discussed with the *Official Visitor*. Further advice and help can be obtained from Colchester Borough Homes via 01206 282514; or via their website at <https://cbhomes.org.uk> ; or by e mail at info@cbhomes.org.uk

Moving Out

If you wish to vacate the almshouse to live elsewhere, you must give the trustees written notice of not less than one calendar month. Maintenance contributions remain payable until the notice period expires and the dwelling is vacated. When the resident vacates for whatever reason, all items belonging to the resident should be removed by him or her forthwith. In the event of the death of a resident, their personal representatives are responsible for

Maintenance Contribution 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 Maintenance Contribution for a period of one month after the date on which they vacate as well as their utility bills.

Trustees have the right to start the process of setting aside the appointment in the event of non-payment of Maintenance Contribution.

In the unlikely event that any possessions, chattels or goods are, without the written agreement of the charity, left abandoned by the resident in the almshouse after the resident has vacated, the charity will take reasonable care of them for a period of up to 4 weeks. After this period the Dunton's Almshouses will arrange the disposal of items and the resident will be responsible for any costs incurred.

Health and Safety

Doctor and Dentist

If you do not have a General Practitioner or Dentist, you will find details of local practices in Appendix 3. The name of your GP should be given to the *Official Visitor*. You have every right for your medical affairs to remain entirely confidential but if you have a chronic health problem it would be advisable, and you might feel safer if the *Official Visitor* is made aware of it so that appropriate action can be taken in an emergency. Anything that you share with the *Official Visitor* will be kept in confidence within the charity. Similarly, if you need to have additional help from an outside care agency to help you maintain your independence, either in the short term or on a long-term basis, then this information should be shared with the *Official Visitor*.

If you become ill or are in serious difficulties and there is no close family or friend to assist, then the *Official Visitor* will make every effort to contact your next of kin, GP, Emergency Services or Social Services, on your behalf. It is essential that you let the charity have details of (names, addresses and telephone numbers) next of kin contacts, and to notify us of any changes. Please note that the *Official Visitor* should be contacted in office hours only (weekdays 9.00 am to 5.00 pm) for more routine matters and only for real emergencies out of hours. If it is not possible to contact the *Official Visitor* for an emergency then you may call on the *Chairperson* or *Clerk* on the numbers listed in Appendix 1.

Fire safety and Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. All the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger the alarm. If you are hard of hearing then please discuss with the *Official Visitor* the installation of the appropriate equipment. In the event of a fire then please vacate the property as safely as possible closing doors after you and then gather at the designated assembly point in the garden area at either end of the terrace.

Please note that **SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED** within the almshouses – smoking must take place outside of the residences.

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. The use of paraffin and portable gas heaters is strictly forbidden – please discuss with the *Official Visitor* if you wish to use additional heaters.

Noise

Please be considerate of your neighbours when listening to music or watching television. Your Terms of Residency states that noise that can be heard by others from outside of your almshouse must be abated by 11 pm. Again, if you are hard of hearing, then please seek advice if needed on suitable appliances that may be purchased to avoid having to use audio/visual devices at loud volume.

Security

Please consider the following:

- **Do** keep your front door always locked. If you have a security chain this should be used to open the door a few inches to identify callers and not be kept in permanent use as this may prevent access in an emergency.
- **Do** make appropriate arrangements for the secure storage of cash and valuables.
- **Do not** allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity – be aware of bogus officials or doorstep salespersons.
- **do not** leave windows open so that intruders can gain access.

You are responsible for the set of keys provided for your property – a master set is held by the *Official Visitor* but 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 vehicles. Your privacy will be always respected; the *Official Visitor* will only enter your home if you ask them to do so, if you have given permission for work to be done in your absence, or in an emergency. Please do not obtain extra keys for anyone else without consent, as this will lessen security.

Services

Supply of Service

Each resident is responsible for his or her electricity and gas supply – when moving to your almshouse, you will be advised where the gas meter, electric meter and main switch fuse box are located.

Residents choose their own gas and electricity supplier. However, for safety and emergency purposes, residents must provide the Charity with their chosen supplier's details.

When you register with a power supplier you may wish to consider asking the supplier to include you on the Priority Service Register. This can be a valuable service for you should you need assistance from your supplier, there is more information in Appendix 4 regarding the Priority Services Register.

The cost of your water supply is included in your Maintenance Contribution. You will be shown where the water stopcock is when you first take up residence.

Furniture & Fittings

The accommodation offered to you is unfurnished apart from the permanent fixtures and fittings e.g. built in cupboards and cabinets. We recommend that your soft furniture is rated for fire safety.

Gardens and communal areas, including fencing and gates.

These are maintained by the charity and are there for you to enjoy. Each property has its own designated patio area outside of the back doors – it is your responsibility to maintain your area and to ensure that anything kept outside on the patio does not look unsightly and is not a potential trip hazard.

Insurance.

The properties are fully insured by the charity but not any contents belonging to residents – we strongly advise that you take out insurance on your belongings.

Television licences.

You do not need to purchase your own Television license as this is provided for you by the charity at a special discretionary rate for almshouse residents.

Telephones, Broadband and internet.

Residents are responsible for the provision of these services. We would advise that you consider subscribing to a Careline service or similar if your health is poor or you feel you could benefit from the added security of such a service. Further details are available by contacting Age UK (formerly Age Concern) Colchester on 01206 368420 or Colchester City Council on 01206 282222

Council tax

Each resident is responsible for paying his or her council tax. Colchester City Council have graded all Dunton's Almshouses as Band A. As you are the only adult living in your home you are entitled to a 25% single person discount on your Council Tax bill (see Appendix 5).

Cleaning and refuse collection.

Each resident is responsible for cleaning in their own property, including windows internally and externally. If you have difficulty with any cleaning tasks then please discuss this initially with the *Official Visitor*.

Storing excess items presents a safety hazard and in extreme cases of hoarding, trustees may have to consider setting aside the resident's appointment.

Refuse collection is carried out by Colchester City Council contractors and publish a timetable¹ on the web detailing what is collected on specific alternate weeks – collection days are currently on Fridays. Any refuse to be collected should be left by the gates at either end of the terrace ensuring that the public footpath is not blocked in any way.

¹ <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/your-recycling-calendar/>

General information

[Data Protection Policy](#)

The Charity policy for data protection is in line with Data Protection legislation and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The Charity only maintains personal information on residents that is necessary, in a secure and safe place. This information is never shared with a third party without a resident's permission. Our Data Protection Policy is available upon request from the *Clerk to the Trustees*.

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

The Charity takes Safeguarding seriously and has a policy in place to protect all residents. If you, as a resident, are the victim of any kind of abuse be it physical, verbal, emotional, financial, or sexual or suspect that another resident is a possible victim then please contact the *Official Visitor* or *Clerk* in the first instance. Our Safeguarding Policy is available upon request from the *Clerk to the Trustees*.

[Income support/benefits/universal credit etc.](#)

If you have any problems or difficulties with benefits or income which you are unable to resolve with the support of your next of kin, then feel free to discuss them in confidence with the *Official Visitor* if you are comfortable to do so. The *Official Visitor* will try to guide you to the most relevant organisation where you can find support.

Alternatively, help and advice may be obtained from Colchester Citizen's Advice Bureau, Colchester Age UK or Colchester City Council's Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support department (details of these organisations are in Appendix 3)

[Parking](#)

There is no dedicated off-street parking for the almshouses unless you have been allocated a specific space as a disabled driver and Blue Badge holder, with the space delineated with white markings on the road. Whilst unrestricted parking is permitted in front of some of the properties, please note that it can become difficult to park at certain times e.g. during school term times for dropping off and

picking up of children. It would be advisable to let any visitors with cars know about this.

[Next of Kin](#)

The name, address and telephone numbers of your next of kin, or a nominated representative, must be supplied to the charity. He or she may be contacted should the trustees have concerns about your wellbeing. Should your next of kin details change in any way you must inform the Official Visitor as soon as you are able.

[Lasting Power of Attorney](#)

It is strongly recommended that you arrange 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. Your solicitor should be able to advise you on these matters but if you do not have one the local Citizens Advice Bureau or Age UK Colchester (see Appendix 3) could offer some guidance and advice on these matters.

[Local Organisations.](#)

There are many clubs and organisations in Dedham – the best place for information on these is the Parish Magazine distributed monthly to each household by the church.

[Social Media](#)

Social media is a feature of our everyday lives and can be a great help in keeping in touch with people and events, but we would emphasise that residents using social media (such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram or other platforms) are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via these media about the Charity, its Trustees, or other residents.

If things go wrong

Complaints.

It is our sincere hope that your residency at Dunton's Almshouses is trouble free. However, should you wish to make a complaint, then please discuss this informally in the first instance with the *Official Visitor*, as this can lead to better understanding and very often to a quick resolution of the issue.

If the complaint cannot be solved quickly or if the complaint is more serious, it should be made in writing and send to the *Official Visitor* who will escalate your complaint to the Board of Trustees. Complaints may be made by residents, their carers and families or a representative of a resident. A written complaint should include sufficient detail to enable the charity to investigate.

The *Clerk to the Trustees* will acknowledge your complaint within 7 working days and Dunton's Almshouse Trust aim to respond formally to you with a proposed resolution within 28 days. If you remain dissatisfied with the response, then again please explain why this is so in writing to the *Chairperson of the Board of Trustees* who will consider whether some independent arbitration is appropriate.

Emergency Accommodation.

Should at any time your almshouse be rendered inhabitable through structural damage caused by fire, flooding or storm damage then every effort will be made to secure emergency accommodation for you locally (if that is your wish and you do not have family nearby to assist) in the short term. If the damage is such that a considerable time will be needed to make the property habitable again, then we will of course give you reasonable assistance to secure temporary accommodation until such time as your almshouse is in a suitable state of repair for you to move back into.

Finally, we hope that your residency with us will be a happy and contented time, and that this handbook will prove to be useful to you.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Trustees and Contact Points

Position	Name	Telephone	e-mail
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees	Clifford Sims		Via Clerk to Trustees
Official Visitor	Ian Lovelock	07710 302746	Ian.lovelock@btinternet.com
Clerk to Trustees	Amanda Watkins		clerk.duntons@gmail.com
Trustee	Jane Jewell		
Trustee	Helen Roberts		
Trustee	Carolyn Clayton		
Trustee	Tim Sarson		
Trustee	Paul Maston		

Appendix 2 – Dunton’s Almshouse Trust Policies

The following are policies that the Dunton’s Almshouse Trust have formally in place and are freely available to all Residents or their next of kin upon request:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Complaints
- Data Protection
- Financial Control
- Investment Policy
- Risk Management
- Safeguarding

[Appendix 3 – Locals Services](#)

You may find the following information useful.

Service	Address	Telephone
Doctor	Ardleigh Surgery Dedham Road Ardleigh CO7 7LD	01206 230224
Doctor	Constable Medical Practice, Heath Road, East Bergholt CO7 6RT	01206 298272
Dentist	Dedham Dental Surgery Princel Lane, Dedham, CO7 6HE	01206 322489
Optician	Patrick & Menzies 30 High Street, Mistley, Manningtree CO11 1AJ	01206 392529
Chiropodist	London House, High Street, Dedham, CO7 6HA	01206 322674
Citizens Advice	28 Middleborough Colchester CO1 1TG	0808 278 7853
Age Concern Colchester	Winsleys House High Street Colchester, CO1 1UG	01206 368420
Essex County Council Social Care		0345 603 7630

[Appendix 4 – Energy Supplier Priority Service Register](#)

When you register with a supplier you may wish to consider asking the supplier to include you on the Priority Service Register. The Priority Services Register is a free support service that makes sure extra help is available to people in vulnerable situations. You are eligible if you:

- have reached your state pension age.
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition.
- are recovering from an injury.
- have a hearing or sight condition.
- have a mental health condition.
- have extra communication needs (such as if you don't speak or read English well)
- need to use medical equipment that requires a power supply.
- have poor or no sense of smell.
- would struggle to answer the door or get help in an emergency.

You might still be able to register for other reasons if your situation isn't listed. For example, if you need short-term support after a stay in hospital.

Provide your supplier your contact details and as much information as you can about your needs.

Your supplier can pass your details to your network operator to add you to their register too. It's a good idea to ask them to do this if you rely on your energy supply for medical reasons.

If you have a different supplier for your gas and electricity, you need to contact them both.

You'll need to register again with any new supplier if you switch supplier.

[Appendix 5 - How to apply Single Person Discount on Council Tax](#)

Dedham is in the **Colchester City Council** area for Council Tax.

To complete your application you will need the following details:

- Your Council Tax account number (on your bill)
- Your name, address, contact details
- The date you became the only adult living in the property

You can complete the online application form on the Colchester City Council website at www.colchester.gov.uk/council-tax-spd/. This form lets you:

- Tell the council that you live alone
- Tell them if others have moved out (and give forwarding addresses)
- Update them if someone moves in (which may affect your discount)

Submit the form online. If the council needs more information to check your eligibility, they will contact you.

Once approved, the council will **adjust your Council Tax bill** and send you a new bill showing the 25 % reduction.

Important to note - It may take a few weeks for the council to process the application and issue the updated bill.



Registered charity no: 207264

Affiliated to the Almshouses Association.