



## Applying to live at Devizes Almshouses – Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your enquiry about coming to live at Devizes Almshouses. We hope that the answers we give to the following frequently asked questions may prove helpful and will enable you to decide if you want to apply to us for housing.

### Where are the almshouses?

We maintain 56 accommodation units, all but one at our main site at Sedgefield Gardens / St James Gardens, a few minutes walk from Devizes town centre and other facilities such as doctors, dentists, etc.

### Can I apply for a Devizes Almshouses property?

Devizes Almshouses provide affordable housing in Devizes. To be accepted onto our application list you must:

- Usually be aged 60 or over.
- Have lived in or around Devizes for at least 5 years.
- Not own your own home.
- Be of modest income and have only moderate savings / capital, such that you can support yourself financially (especially those who do not receive housing and council tax benefits) and be able to meet any future care needs.
- Have a housing need or be experiencing some other form of hardship.
- Be capable of living independently, as no onsite care is provided.
- Have the right to reside in the UK (we are legally obliged to verify this).

### What happens when I send my form back?

When we get your form back we will check to see if you are eligible - if you are not eligible for our accommodation we will write to you as soon as possible to say so.

If you are eligible, we will register you on our waiting list and will in due course arrange for the Clerk and a Trustee to visit you to discuss your application and your housing needs.

If we register you on our waiting list this does not mean we can help you straightaway and we would advise you to keep looking at other options, particularly if your housing need is urgent.

When an almshouse becomes available, trustees consider all applicants on the waiting list at that time and will offer the accommodation to the applicant(s) they consider to be most in need at that time.

If and when we are in a position to offer you accommodation we will contact you to make sure you still want to be considered and check all your details are up to date. At this time we may also take up the references you have given us.

### How are the Almshouses run?

On a day to day basis the almshouses are run by a small staff of five, all of which are part time except the Warden. The staff are supported by a trustee board of 11 trustees.

### What accommodation is provided?

The 56 units comprise a mix on one and two bedroom accommodation – single applicants are only considered for a one bedroom unit, whilst couple applicants are considered for a two bedroom unit.

All properties are ground floor accommodation, mostly bungalow style except for the 7 self-contained flats around Slade House. All the properties have a kitchen, bathroom (all with walk in shower, no bath), sitting room and bedroom(s). The properties are unfurnished, although cookers, a fridge-freezer and floor coverings are provided. All the properties benefit from gas central heating.

Many of the properties have a small area of garden which the resident(s) can tend, if they are able and so inclined. The communal gardens are maintained by a garden contractor in accordance with the instruction of trustees.

### What support is provided?

Applicants must be able to live independently, although this can be with the assistance of family or care visits as required. Applicant must have sufficient mobility to be able to carry out simple tasks for themselves when the carer is not present. This is because the Warden is provided on a 'good neighbour' basis which means that the Warden is not permitted to offer any assistance with personal care or the administration of medication. The Warden can make a telephone call (e.g. to next of kin, a doctor or 999) and each property is equipped with an Emergency Call System.

### How much would I pay?

Our residents are not tenants but are beneficiaries of the charity - you would be given a licence to occupy rather than a tenancy agreement. So you wouldn't pay rent but something called a Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC). The WMC is based on an equivalent fair rent advised periodically by the Valuation Office Agency (a government agency). The amount of WMC varies by type, size and age of the almshouse.

In addition, as the Charity pays all of the gas bills, you would pay a weekly Heating and Hot Water Contribution (HWC). The WMC and HWC are paid together by bank standing order, four weekly in arrears. Only the WMC is eligible for housing benefit, which may be limited by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

The Charity pay water charges, and television licence fees (where payable) as a charitable benefit. You would pay for all your other bills yourself – electricity, telephone, council tax, etc.

### Can I bring a pet?

Generally no, although with the permission of the Trustees a cat or caged small bird may be allowed providing it does not become a nuisance to other residents.

### Is there parking?

Yes, there is limited provision for parking in Sedgefield Gardens and at Slade House, however there is no allocated parking and if a space is not available residents must park off site.

### Do I have to join in social events?

Residents lead completely independent lives and you are free to make choices about which, if any, social events you choose to attend.

Residents are automatically members of Slade House Social Club, which is very active and mainly run by the residents themselves. Activities include a weekly coffee morning, weekly bingo evening and usually one or two other events per month. Slade House Hall also hosts an exercise class twice weekly, and a singing group twice monthly, which residents are welcome to join.

### Are there lots of rules?

We aim to interfere as little as possible in the lives of residents. However, as with any community we need to have some guidelines as to what is acceptable. A Resident's Handbook is given to each resident when they move in which sets these out in more detail and you would be asked to sign a form known as a 'Licence to Occupy', to confirm you understand your rights and obligations.

You should note that as a licensee your security of tenure is limited and you should bear this in mind and seek advice if you are giving up secure accommodation. However, we rarely if ever have to ask people to leave, unless you are no longer able to look after yourself or if you have broken the terms of your licence in a serious way.

### Is there a no smoking policy?

Smoking is prohibited in all communal (i.e. 'public') areas of the almshouses, in line with the law. However residents are permitted to smoke in their own accommodation.

### Can I have friends and relatives to stay?

No, your home is designated as sheltered housing for you and is not intended to accommodate extra people. There is a guest room, which will accommodate two people and which can be booked, for a small nightly fee, for visitors. Priority is given to relatives visiting sick residents.

### What happens next?

If, having read and considered the information above, you believe that you are eligible and that almshouse accommodation would be suitable for you, please complete the application form and return it to us at the address shown

Applications remain valid for the period of three years after which you will be requested to update your application. You are also requested to notify the Charity of any change in your circumstances or if you no longer need to be considered for an almshouse.