

Dartmouth United Charities (DUC)

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Family Housing

1. HISTORY OF DUC:

Dartmouth United Charities (DUC) was established in 1909, to provide Almshouse accommodation for residents of Dartmouth. The charity operates in accordance with Schemes prepared by the Charity Commission and is administered by voluntary Trustees. A small staff team carry out day to day administration, based at the Charities' office.

The DUC traditionally provided 1-bedroom warden supported flats to residents of a more mature age. More recently Trustees recognised the need for low cost housing for local families with young children who have established work, family and support networks in Dartmouth.

Many families have been priced out of the private rental market and are not high enough priority for scarce council allocated housing. This has resulted in young families being forced to look for accommodation out of the town.

Over the past 10 years the DUC has purchased 10 houses suited to local families. Trustees hope this will provide a stable home to raise children whilst enabling families to save towards their future accommodation once their children are no longer considered dependents. There is a 12 month probationary period after which, if you remain eligible, your appointment will be extended for the duration that you have dependent children.

2. ALMSHOUSES:

Almshouses are unfurnished dwellings, provided to help people in housing need and who are of good character. Applicants must have lived in the town of Dartmouth for at least 2 years leading up to their appointment or evidence strong connections to the town and would otherwise live here were it not for the high cost of housing.

It is important to note that anyone appointed as a resident of an almshouse charity is a beneficiary of the charity, **not a tenant**. This means they have no legal interest in the almshouse accommodation which is allocated to him/her, but occupies it simply with the permission of the Trustees, who have the legal rights of owners. This permission can be withdrawn in certain circumstances. Trustees of an almshouse charity have no power to grant a tenancy of an almshouse to any beneficiary. We do not accept applications from those already in council/housing association properties as you have a fair rent, the ability to exchange and far greater security through having a tenancy.

3. CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS

Please only apply if you can answer YES to the following questions

All adults in your household who will be living in the almshouse, have lived in Dartmouth the last 2 years or have strong local connections to Dartmouth (work, close family) and would be living here if suitable/low cost housing could be found?

Your current landlord is not a local council or housing association

If appointed, you will have dependent children living with you? (age 0-15 or age 16-18 in full-time education and living at home)

You are in financial need and are struggling to pay for private rented accommodation in the area?
You have no criminal convictions and can obtain local references to confirm you are of good character
You have read the application guidance and understand that if appointed you would be on a license to occupy, not a tenancy

Please note that if you are appointed as a single adult and you wish to have a partner or any adult move in at a future stage, you will be asked to make a new application which will be assessed against the above criteria.

4. ACCOMMODATION PROVISION:

DUC has family houses (2-bed and 3-bed) with outside space for their occupants' use. Each house comes decorated in neutral colours with floor coverings provided throughout, fitted bathrooms and kitchens with a cooker/hob installed. Otherwise properties are unfurnished.

All Residents pay a 'Monthly Maintenance Contribution' (opposed to rent) to the DUC, towards accommodation, insurance and fire protection services.

All family housing residents pay their own electric, gas, water, telephone, TV license and Council Tax charges. They are also responsible for the internal redecoration of their homes. The DUC is responsible for all the external maintenance and some repairs to its buildings.

5. COMPLETION OF APPLICATION FORM:

The application form requires detailed information regarding your personal, housing and financial circumstances which the Trustees will use to establish your level of need. Failure to disclose relevant information may affect your application. Misleading or inaccurate information may lead to your appointment being set aside and to you being asked to leave the almshouse.

If you have any difficulties completing the form, please do not hesitate to contact the office and the staff will do what they can to assist.

The personal data on this form, and all other information relating to an almshouse appointment will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Please return your completed application form to the DUC office by or before the stated closing date. Late forms will not be considered.

6. AFTER COMPLETION OF YOUR APPLICATION FORM:

After the closing date, a panel of Trustees will review all applications. If you fulfil the qualifying criteria and are deemed to be in greatest need you will be invited to attend an informal interview with two or three Trustees. Prior to interview you will also be given the opportunity to view the property if it is vacant.

You will be informed by letter/email shortly after the interview date whether or not your application has been successful. If you are successful, the offer of accommodation will be made to you in writing. This offer will be subject to references and verification of information provided on the form. You will be asked to sign a letter confirming the details of your appointment and your agreement to the Almshouse Rules and Regulations.

Confirmation of your date of occupancy, moving details etc. will be provided through the office. When you collect your keys, you will be given a Residents' Handbook. You will also be shown around your house in order for you to become familiar with the facilities provided.

7. REVIEW OF YOUR APPOINTMENT:

As a resident you must inform Trustees of any change in your personal circumstances (for example an inheritance, an increase in your income, marriage or any household changes). The Trustees will review your circumstances on a yearly basis and you may be asked to complete a further form to confirm your situation. If you no longer meet the criteria you may be asked to leave the almshouse.

The Trustees encourage successful applicants to save towards their future housing needs. When circumstances are reviewed, residents are asked to provide proof of savings achieved whilst occupying the almshouse. Savings will be considered in a positive light as evidence of good character. It is hoped that residents' savings can then be applied towards their next house move.

Once you have saved and are close to moving on, you can request a grant from the DUC to help meet some of the moving costs. The Trustees may use their discretion, to refund you a proportion of the Maintenance Contribution paid over the years you have lived in the almshouse.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you require any further information.

Dartmouth United Charities

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Thank you