

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 flats to residents of a more mature age. More recently Trustees wanted to assist young Dartmouth families in need of housing. This has led to 6 houses being purchased in Townstal. Trustees hope this more spacious accommodation will provide low cost housing to families and will enable them to save towards their future accommodation whether in private rented accommodation, shared ownership housing or by purchasing a privately owned house. Initial terms of appointment are for 3 years, if you remain eligible and show a commitment to saving, your appointment may be extended.

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 parish of Dartmouth for at least 2 years or have 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 This permission can be withdrawn in certain circumstances.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 and greater security through having a tenancy.

3. 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 and 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 electrical, 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.

4. 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 financial 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. Some details may be shared with relevant organisations for the purposes of verifying your application, none will be disclosed for any inappropriate purpose. You may have access to your personal information on request. For further information please ask to see our Data Protection Policy.

Please return your completed application form to the DUC office by or before the stated closing date.

5. 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 financial need of accommodation 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.

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.

6. 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 other relationship 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