

Dartmouth United Charities (DUC)

Guidance Notes for Applicants -flats

1. HISTORY OF DUC:

Dartmouth United Charities (DUC) was established in 1909, to provide low cost 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 Victoria Road accommodation comprises of 19 warden supported flats in 6 buildings. These have traditionally been allocated to residents of a more mature age, however there are no age restrictions in the scheme. The initial appointment is for a 12 month probationary period, if you remain eligible your appointment will be extended.

The charity also owns eight houses to assist local families with dependent children in need of housing.

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 likely that the selected applicant will be in receipt of/eligible for housing benefit.

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 This permission can be withdrawn in certain circumstances.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.

DUC's aim is to provide convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting which allows residents to come and go as they please. Almshouses provide security and our flats also offer a part-time warden with weekly visits to support residents.

Emergency call systems are provided in flats where appropriate to resident's needs. This means that, in an emergency, such as a sudden illness or a fall, a resident can get help quickly. In addition, there are many other provisions designed to make daily life as easy as possible and to encourage neighbouring residents to help and support each other. DUC does not have facilities to give care to its residents apart from in an emergency (when family/friends would be contacted to provide the care/support required).

3. CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS

Please only apply if you can answer confirm all the following statements apply

All adults in my 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?
My current landlord is not a local council or housing association
If appointed, I will not have any dependent children living with me
I am in financial need and am struggling to pay for private rented accommodation in the area
I do not have any unspent criminal convictions and can obtain local references to confirm I am of good character
I do not own or intent to own a cat or a dog or any other pet unsuited to a small flat
I have read the application guidance and understand that if appointed I 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:

The vacant flat in Victoria Road is a 1 bed property on the first floor of the building. There are 2 other flats in the building along with a shared laundry facility on the first floor. The flat has a small entrance hall with built in storage, a double bedroom with built in wardrobes; an en-suite shower room; and a small galley style kitchen with an open plan lounge/diner. There is newly fitted double glazing throughout along with gas central heating/hot water. The kitchen comes with a freestanding electric cooker and the flat has carpets/vinyl throughout, otherwise properties are unfurnished and neutrally decorated.

The flat is within easy access of the town centre in Victoria Road. The communal entrance hall, staircase, landing and corridors are cleaned weekly, but it is the resident's responsibility to clean their own flat. The laundry room is equipped with a large washing machine and tumble dryer on a coin operated use.

All Residents pay a 'Monthly Maintenance Contribution' (in lieu of rent) to the DUC, towards accommodation, water, hot water and heating, insurance and fire protection services. The DUC also pays for TV licenses for residents over age 65 who are working less than 16 hours a week.

Residents pay their own electricity, telephone/broadband and Council Tax charges. Residents are responsible for the internal redecoration of their homes. The DUC is responsible for all the external maintenance and some repairs to its buildings, which includes the upkeep of communal areas in the Victoria Road buildings.

There is a small ensuite guest room available in a nearby building for the short-stay visits of family/friends who wish to offer companionship and support to residents. This can be booked through the office for a modest nightly charge and is offered to those in the greatest need first (in particular to relatives of a resident who is unwell).

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 meet to 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 meet with Trustees. Prior to this meeting you will also be given the opportunity to view the vacant property. You will be required to bring original documents to evidence your income, savings, debt and proof of ID to the interview.

You will be informed by letter shortly after the interview 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 a credit check (you are not expected to meet a credit threshold). You will then 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 and introduced to the DUC staff including the warden. You will also be shown around your flat 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 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.

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

Dartmouth United Charities

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Thank you