

Harborne Parish Lands Charity

Residents Handbook

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Introduction

Harborne Parish Lands Charity would like to extend a very warm welcome to you as a new resident. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be very happy here. The purpose of this handbook is to provide useful information for those who have been offered or have recently moved into sheltered housing, as well as useful information about your new home. It also sets out information about the charity and its history.

The almshouse is your home and 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. I am sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting the wishes of others, allowing them their privacy if that is what they wish.

The legal agreement between you and the charity is set out in your License Agreement and you should refer to this document if you have any queries about your or the charity's rights and responsibilities. It may be necessary to amend these rules and regulations from time to time but any changes would be discussed with residents beforehand when you would be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The trustees have tried to minimise these rules and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of the trust.

Once again, a very warm welcome.



History, Governance and Management

Historical Note

The origins of the charity are lost in the mists of time, but it was mentioned in documents dated 1623 and 1640 and may originate in a bequest by Mrs Elizabeth Cowper (also known as Piddock) in 1576. Today the Charity owns various investments and five groups of almshouses containing 99 flats or cottages which were part funded by the Housing Corporation (now the Homes England). The area of benefit is the Ancient Parish of Harborne, in the County of West Midlands and the beneficiaries are the residents of the almshouses and those in need within the parish.

Purpose of the charity

The Trustees must use the income of the Charity in one or both of the following ways:

1. For the benefit of the almspeople of the Charity
2. For relief in need – assisting, either generally or individually, people living in the Ancient Parish who are in need, hardship or distress by making grants of money or providing or paying for items, services or facilities in order to reduce their need.

It is the duty of the Trustee to maximise the income of the charity in order to meet these objectives.

Almoner

The Almoner is a Trustee who visits on a regular basis and makes reports to the Trustees. He or she is always very pleased to meet new residents to offer help and advice.

Management

The trust is governed by a board of voluntary trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is delegated to the CEO (assisted by the Head of Operations).

What is sheltered housing?

Sheltered housing offers support for older residents to assist them to live independently. It is made up of a group (scheme) of unfurnished flats, and bungalows designed for the needs of older people. The aim is to provide comfortable, convenient and secure accommodation whilst encouraging residents to maintain full independence.

You will have your own front door and be able to come and go as you please and have visitors whenever you like. Most of our schemes also has communal facilities such as a lounge, kitchen and laundry for you to use, as well as guest rooms bookable for your friends and family for a charge per night.

All properties are fitted with an alarm system which allows you to get help in an emergency 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Who is it for?

Sheltered housing is generally for people over the age of 60, although younger people may be considered in some circumstances – for example, if you have disabilities.

There is no upper age limit although residents may need to receive or continue receiving support from relatives, friends or other agencies to enable them to continue living independently.



What does you Building Manager do?

- Maintain the communal areas.
- Introduce you to the scheme and explain how to use the communal facilities.
- Fix any repairs or issues in your flat.
- Monitor the condition of your property.
- Work with surveyors and contractors to make sure that our accommodation is maintained and improved.

When are they available?

Building Managers are available on site five days a week.

If you need help during an emergency or during out of hours you can pull the cord or press the alarm button for help from the LifeLine contact centre.

Building Managers	
Tony Whitehouse Harborne House & Dore House	07773 820 689
Kevin James Firs Close	07867 451 988
Max Bashier Harborne Cottages & Larksfield	07867 451 989

What does your Support Officer do?

- Dyan offers support and advice to all our residents, she is able to book you an appointment if you request one.
- As part of the service to you, the Support Officer will compile a support plan with you when you move in and then review it with you regularly afterwards. The frequency of the review will be agreed with you and you can ask for a review at any time.
- The support plan should be signed by you to show that you agree with it. If you are unhappy with any part, this will be written into the plan. A copy will be given to you and another kept on file in a secure place. Your support plan is used to meet your needs and is confidential
- Arrange any support to help you remain independent.
- Work in partnership with other agencies, carers and support networks to help you access services you need to live independently.

When are they available?

Dyan holds weekly support drop-ins at Harborne House, Firs Close and Harborne Cottages.

You can contact Dyan on 07887 764 106.

Please note HPLC Staff are not able to:

- Carry out duties which are the responsibility of other organisations, such as social services.
- Act as a carer, nurse or night sitter.
- Administer drugs, or medication of any kind.
- Do your washing, shopping, cleaning or cooking.
- Look after your valuables.
- Accept gifts for personal gain.
- Look after pets.
- Dispose of domestic waste.

LifeLine Alarm System



Each individual flat or bungalow within our sheltered housing schemes is connected to an alarm system enabling help to be called in an emergency.

The alarm system can be used to raise a call from anywhere in the property by simply pressing either the pendant that is provided or by pulling the nearest cord.

This will then activate the unit. The home unit has a powerful loudspeaker and sensitive microphone, allowing hands free two-way speech to be established between you and the person receiving the call. LifeLine's Control Centre is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

This means that, if there is an emergency when the Building Manager is off-site, you will be able to talk directly to the operator at the Control Centre who will make sure the appropriate help is called. Our Support Officer will be told about any incidents that take place in their absence so that they have up-to-date information. Please inform our Support Officer if there are any changes to your emergency contacts or next of kin.

LifeLine staff will be able to:

- Call an ambulance crew if for example you are not able to access a phone.
- Contact HPLC staff if you need any support.
- Report a fault for you at the weekend or after normal working hours.
- Contact a key holder/relative in an emergency on your behalf.
- Act appropriately and in accordance with our guidelines in an emergency.

Answering the Front Door

The unit is also used to answer the front door. Any visitors or delivery drivers will call your flat number and your phone will ring. To admit someone, you recognise into the building press the button next to the phone.

Pull Cord Testing

The LifeLine system requires testing every month. Building Manager Max Bashier will give you at least one week notice before he comes to visit you and test the system to ensure your safety.

Living in Your Home

Holidays and absences from your home

Every Monday to Friday the Building Manager will check at 10 AM that you have pressed your "I'm OK" button that morning.

If you do not use the 'I'm ok' button and haven't told us that you will be out, we will call you and check on your flat or bungalow if we do not receive a response.

We would also ask that you let your Building Manager know when you are going to be away from your home – for example, when you go on holiday or visit relatives so that we don't worry about you and take any emergency action.





WMC and other charges

You are responsible for paying the Weekly Maintenance Charge (WMC). These charges go towards the provision of staff, and the alarm call system as well as towards any communal heating provided and the cleaning of shared areas.

You can pay your WMC in one of the following ways:

- Direct from your bank via direct debit or standing order
- Via calling AllPay (please refer to your AllPay card)
- At the Post Office using your AllPay card.

You are also responsible for paying council tax and other bills.

Please note that at all our schemes the cost of heating and water rates are included in the WMC, the annual cost being divided equally over the whole year.

At Harborne House and Firs Close, your Day Elec (electricity usage during the day) is billed every month, you therefore don't need an energy provider if you live at either of these schemes.

Please get in touch with either Carolyn or Lara to set up a direct debit to pay your WMC.

What does the WMC cover?

Weekly maintenance contributions are payable in advance. If you receive Housing Benefit from the local authority, arrangements can be made for your Housing Benefit to be paid directly into the charity's bank account. If you are experiencing difficulties in claiming, please let the charity know.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. Items covered by the WMC include:

- Building repairs and maintenance.
- Servicing and repair of water, gas and electrical installations'
- Decoration costs.
- Buildings Insurance.
- Heating.
- Water rates.

The level of WMC is reviewed annually and meetings are held with residents to explain any changes.

Housing Benefit

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit to help with your housing costs. Even if you do have income in addition to your basic retirement pension, you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs.

You may be entitled to Housing Benefit to help you with your housing costs. For more information and details of how to claim, please speak to our Housing Officer.

It is important that you inform your local benefits office if there are changes in your financial circumstances as they have the power to demand reimbursement in the event of an over-payment.

Please remember to contact a member of staff when you receive any letters related to your income. We can forward copies of any correspondence to Housing Benefit to ensure they are updated if your income changes.



Terms of occupation

You will have a copy of the terms of occupation which you signed when you were appointed a resident. As a "beneficiary of an almshouse charity" you are not a tenant, but the Trustees cannot ask you to leave unless there are exceptional circumstances (see "Moving Out"). You have agreed to pay a Weekly Maintenance Contribution which includes an amount for the services provided.

Insurance

The charity insures the building and its own contents. You are responsible for insuring your personal belongings.

Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit

You are responsible for paying your own council tax and will receive the annual Council Tax Notice from the local authority in March each year. People living alone are entitled to council tax relief of 25%.

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have only modest savings, you may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. Depending upon your precise circumstances, this could pay your council tax in whole or in part. Please speak to the Support Worker if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the claim form.



Television

A television licence is required for all properties with a TV but, if you are over the age of 75, the licence is free. There are also concessions of up to 50% for anyone who is blind or has a severe sight impairment.

As the housing offered by HPLC is almshouse housing you may be eligible for a discounted ARC TV License if you are either:

- **Retired:** You must be 60 years old or over. If you are in paid work, this must be for no more than 15 hours per week.
- **Or disabled:** You must have substantially impaired sight, hearing or speech, a mental disorder or be substantially physically disabled by illness, any impairment present from birth or otherwise.

Harborne House and Firs Close have a TV in the communal lounge; the TV license is funded through the resident's fund.



Wills

You are strongly advised to make a Will. If you wish to leave personal property to a relative or friend a Will is essential. A solicitor is the best person to help you make a Will, and if you require assistance in finding one, we suggest you contact your local Citizen's Advice Bureau. Ask the Support Officer if you find this difficult.

Next of Kin

During the sign up we will ask you to nominate a next of kin, this person will be responsible for clearing the flat or bungalow and dealing with your affairs if you pass away.

Please note, Housing Benefit payments stop the Sunday following the claimant passing away.

Repairs

The charity is responsible for both external and internal repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. Please report all necessary work to the Building Manager who will arrange for it to be carried out.

Contractors will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made, however, if an emergency arises such as a water leak.



Adaptations

If you are having difficulty managing at home because of a disability, we may be able to help - for example by fitting handrails etc. If you think you would benefit from this type of work, please ask your Building Manager or Support Officer for advice.
We will also fit a wet room in your property if you believe you would benefit from one.

White Goods

HPLC provide a fridge-freezer and oven in every kitchen. We will repair or replace when needed. If you wish to bring your own we will try to accommodate that.

There are wall mounted heaters in the bathroom and kitchen. In the interests of safety, of yourself and other residents, paraffin or calor gas heaters are forbidden. Electric fires with trailing leads are discouraged.



Grants for New Residents

HPLC also have a grants programme for residents of the Ancient Parish of Harborne. New residents with a low income, and limited savings may be eligible for a grant for a bed, bedding and kitchen essentials. This is usually discussed on sign up but if you believe this applies to you, please ask either Carolyn or Lara.

Legionella

The risk of contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a domestic property where the water services are regularly used is very low, but to decrease the risk even further, shower heads are cleaned on a quarterly basis. This will involve a contractor accessing your flat. At least one weeks' notice will be given beforehand.

Improvements to Your Home

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 CEO. No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed without prior consent.

As the CEO has responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the almshouses, he will have to 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.

Whilst at all times the charity will respect the privacy of residents, it is a condition that residents allow reasonable and regular access to their almshouses for repairs and decoration to be carried out. Representatives of the charity will visit from time to time by prior appointment. Annual inspections are carried out by the Senior Building Manager to check on the condition of the property.

The charity is responsible for both external and internal repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. Please report all necessary work to the Building Manager who will arrange for it to be carried out.

HPLC offer to redecorate your home every 5 years. Please contact your Building Manager to arrange this.



Consulting Residents

Consultation and involving the residents in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation which will benefit all concerned.

The charity will consult you:

- Before any work is done on your flat or bungalow (except in an emergency).
- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens.
- Before making changes to the amount of weekly maintenance contribution payable.
- Before anyone enters your home (except in an emergency).



Car parking

We provide car parking spaces at all of our sheltered housing schemes for residents and their guests to use.

There are not any reserved spaces although there may be bays marked out for disabled drivers. There will also be a grid marked out near the entrance for use by emergency services and we would ask that you do not park in these spaces.

Refuse disposal

Most of our sheltered schemes have bin stores for the disposal of domestic refuse. It is your responsibility to dispose of all your domestic refuse appropriately. If you have any difficulties with this, please speak to your Building Manager.

Our Pets Policy:

Harborne Parish Lands Charity (HPLC) recognises that animals that are well cared for and responsibly kept can be a positive attribute to the community and that pet ownership often satisfies a need for companionship, daily routine and exercise. Pets can develop an individual's social life because people often talk to others with animals. Pet owners tend to have lower blood pressure and better health than people without pets. For many older people, an animal may be their only friend.

However pet ownership is a privilege, not a right. Irresponsibly owned pets can be the cause of much misery and suffering, both for the animals and those who live around them. Any animal owner must keep their pet under control. Pet owners are responsible for the welfare of the animal and for ensuring that it does not interfere with their neighbours' right to peaceful enjoyment of their home.

Under the terms of Harborne Parish Lands Charity's (HPLC) Letter of Appointment residents are not permitted to keep pets, except caged birds and assistance animals, without HPLC's written permission. HPLC will not discourage pets where facilities exist for their proper care. This policy aims to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and nuisance to neighbours.

Permission to Keep a Pet

When deciding whether or not to permit a resident to keep a pet HPLC will consider:

- The suitability of the accommodation. Where all flat front doors lead onto a communal corridor, and there are no back doors, cats or dogs will not usually be permitted
- The type, breed and sex of the animal and its potential to cause nuisance
- The size and age of the pet
- Whether the pet's vaccinations are up-to-date and the animal has been neutered and micro chipped

HPLC will also take into account the needs of the owner and whether they:

- can keep the pet under control and have the necessary resources to care for, exercise and feed the pet
- can dispose of all waste appropriately
- if the owner is away from home, have arranged for someone to take the pet home with them or made arrangements for the pet to be cared for away from the premises until the resident returns back home.
- have registered the pet with a veterinary surgeon

Residents may not keep any animal registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 or the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

If a resident is permitted to keep a pet it will be on condition that:

- The owner abides by the HPLC Guidelines for Responsible Pet Ownership
- The owner signs a Pet Owning Contract
- The Pet Owning Contract will become null and void once the pet dies

Breaches of the Pet Owning Contract

Any breach of the pet owning contract will be investigated by the Housing Officer. The resident will be visited and the issues discussed. A solution will be identified in conjunction with the resident wherever possible. This may include:

- A move to a more suitable property which may or may not be owned by HPLC
- Provision of information on who to contact for pet welfare advice
- Advice on rehoming the pet if the resident is unable or unwilling to resolve the problem

If the breach continues, permission to keep the pet may be withdrawn. If permission is withdrawn, the animal is not rehomed and serious problems remain, Trustees may consider setting aside the resident's appointment.

Assistance Animals

Properly trained assistance animals such as guide dogs and hearing dogs are permitted at all of the schemes.

Guest Flat

Harborne House and Firs Close have one guest room that can be used by resident's family and friends. These rooms are twin and there is a strict limit on occupancy of one or two persons.

The charge per night is £15. Priority for bookings will normally be given to family and friends of residents who are unwell but, at all other times, bookings will be made on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Our Building Managers are responsible for the management of our guest rooms and this includes overseeing the cleaning and any necessary repairs, as well as making the bookings. If you want to book the guest room, please contact your Building Manager during their normal working hours.

Please note that you will be responsible for the behaviour of your guests whilst they are in the scheme and must make sure that they keep to the terms and conditions of your License Agreement and any rules that are specific to where you live.

Overnight Guests in Flats

Please inform your Building Manager of any overnight guests as they need to know how many people are on-site in case of a fire.



Communal Facilities

All of our communal schemes have communal gardens, and three of the larger schemes have laundry rooms and a communal lounge and kitchen.

The residents at Dore House are welcome to use the communal lounge at Harborne House and the residents at Larksfield are welcome to use the communal lounge at Firs Close.

These areas and facilities are provided for the benefit of all residents and we would ask that you show consideration for others when using them.

Heating

We are responsible for the heating in communal areas and will aim to keep this at a comfortable temperature for all. A charge for this is incorporated into the overall service charge that you pay.

The communal heating system must not be adjusted under any circumstances. The heating system has been set to operate appropriately throughout the building, and unauthorised adjustments can affect the comfort of other residents and the efficient operation of the system. If you believe there is a problem with the heating, please contact your Building Manager, who will arrange for the matter to be investigated.



The Gardens

Gardens Communal gardens are provided for the use of residents and their guests. We carry out regular maintenance of any grassed and planted areas but encourage residents to get involved in the upkeep of certain areas or items where they are able to do so. Please speak to your Building Manager for further details.



The Lounge

This is for use by residents for social events, meetings, parties or just for a cup of tea. All lounges have free Wi-Fi provision.

Communal lounges provide a base for clubs and activities run by our Activities Coordinator.

Communal Television

Firs Close and Harborne House have a communal television in the lounge.

Residents are expected to share use of the television and be respectful of the viewing preferences of others. No resident has exclusive use of the television or the communal lounge.

Where there is disagreement about what to watch, residents should seek to reach a reasonable compromise. Staff may assist if necessary.

Please be considerate of other residents and help keep these facilities welcoming and accessible for everyone.

The kitchen

The kitchen is for the use of residents using the communal lounge and, in some schemes, it may also be used by outside organisations that run clubs or activities for the benefit of residents.

Activities

Our Activities Coordinator organises events, trips and regular activities on the larger scheme. All activities or events are advertised via the noticeboards and flyers posted through your door. Please ask your Building Manager or contact the Activities Coordinator for more information or to make a suggestion.



The Laundry room

Our larger sheltered housing schemes have communal laundry facilities for residents to use and the charge for using these is incorporated into the overall service charge that you pay.

The laundry rooms can be used at any time during its published opening hours but there are rotas that operate in some of our schemes. Residents are asked to be considerate of others, and wherever possible, carry out washing and drying during reasonable daytime and evening hours to avoid disturbing other residents.

Your Building Manager will be able to tell you about this when you first move in. Please note that these machines are for the use of residents, staff and carers only and must not be used for family or friends' laundry.



Bathroom Facilities

Our larger sheltered housing schemes have communal bathroom facilities for the benefit of residents and must be left and clean and tidy after use. In addition residents must be appropriately dressed when traveling to and from the bathroom through communal areas. This helps maintain the comfort, dignity and respect of everyone living within the scheme.

Window cleaning

Harborne Parish Lands is responsible for cleaning the windows on a regular basis.

Mobility Scooters

For health and safety reasons, we do not allow residents or their visitors to use or store mobility scooters within the internal communal areas of any of our sheltered housing schemes.

However, at a number of our schemes, we have dedicated mobility scooter storage and our Building Managers are responsible for allocating this and administering any waiting list.

If there is not any dedicated storage available at your scheme, you must get our permission before making any alterations or additions to your home to accommodate your mobility scooter.
If you have a mobility scooter, you are responsible for using this safely and in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance so as not to endanger anybody, cause a nuisance or damage property.
You must have and provide evidence of adequate and current insurance.

Smoking

It is against the law to smoke in any internal communal areas. This does not apply within your own property but please refrain from smoking if we or one of our contractors is due to visit your property.

Smoking is allowed in communal gardens but please dispose of any cigarette ends responsibly and do not leave these on the ground.



In each of our sheltered housing schemes, there is a notice board giving you information about your scheme, its activities and the surrounding area. As a resident, you are allowed to put information on these boards but we would ask that you speak to your Building Manager before doing so. All information placed on the noticeboards is regularly checked.

Moving Out

If you wish to vacate the almshouse to live elsewhere, you must give the Head of Operations written notice of no less than four weeks. Maintenance contributions remain payable until the notice period expires and the dwelling is vacated. All items belonging to the resident should be removed by him or her forthwith. In the event of the death of a resident their next of kin are responsible for WMC until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

If any belongings are left after the keys have been returned to the Charity or the licence has ended, you hereby authorise the Charity to dispose of the belongings as it sees fit and the Charity is entitled to charge an amount equivalent to the Maintenance Charge up until the belongings have been disposed of.

If a resident were to leave their almshouse dwelling without giving notice, they would be liable for paying their WMC for a period of four weeks after the date on which they vacate.

Trustees have the right to start the process of setting aside the appointment if

- You were appointed based on false information that You or someone on Your behalf provided.
- You have failed to pay the Maintenance Charge.
- You have not kept or you have broken any of the License Agreement.
- You have caused damage.
- You have caused serious and/or persistent nuisance.
- You no longer qualify as a beneficiary of the Charity.
- You are, in the Charity's opinion, in need of more services than the Almshouse is able to and/or aims to give.

Safety and Security

Door Locks

All of our properties are fitted with high quality security locks and we hold a master key to be used in emergencies. Extra locks should not be fitted as this could prevent access in an emergency. We would only enter your home if, for example, you call for help via your pull cord or pendant or you don't respond to one of our calls or visits. All properties are fitted with a key safe to allow access to your home in an emergency. It is your responsibility to make sure that a key is left in the key safe. When anyone calls at your door, you should always ask for identification from any caller you do not know.

CCTV

All of our sheltered housing schemes have CCTV to protect the building and make sure that you feel safe and secure in your home.

Please ask your Building Manager if you would like to be able to watch the front door camera on your TV.



Door entry system

All of our sheltered housing schemes have a main door entry system that allows you to let people that you know into the building from your own flat.

- Do not allow anyone into the building unless you know they are visiting you or you are expecting them.
- If someone states they are visiting another resident, they should contact that resident directly to gain access.
- Do not prop open the main entrance door at any time.
- Propping open the entrance door can compromise building security, damage the door-entry system, and lead to costly repairs.

The Master Key

HPLC holds a master key which can open your front door but it will only be used in an emergency or with your permission. You must not fit locks and chains without our consent as these may delay access in an emergency. We may be able to advise on alternative security arrangements, such as key safes if carers or families need constant access.

Your privacy will be respected. The Building Manager has strict instructions only to enter your home:

- if you ask him/her to.
- if you have given permission for work to be done.
- in an emergency.

Additional keys should not be cut without our consent as this would give access to people other than residents and might endanger security if they were lost.

Access Fobs

On sign up we will issue an access fob to get into the building for your own use. If you would like to request additional access fobs for your family or friends, please contact your Building Manager or Head of Operations. We charge £8 for each additional fob.



Please consider the following to keep yourself safe:

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times.
- Use the spy hole to identify callers before opening the door and use the front door camera on your TV to identify any visitors before letting them in.

DO NOT:

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. If you are in doubt, please call the Building Manager, a family friend, the alarm control centre or the police.
- Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access.
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

BE AWARE OF bogus officials or doorstep salesmen. Always ask for proof of identity.



Fire Safety

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. The fire policies are frequently reviewed and fire testing and drills are carried out regularly.

All of the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors which on sensing smoke will trigger the alarm. If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Action

You should remain in your home and await further instructions. Wear warm clothing and switch off any appliances. When the fire alarm sounds, the fire service should respond immediately. The building has been designed to resist the spread of fire and smoke, and provided that the doors to your almshouse and the doors in the corridor remain closed, there will be plenty of time for the fire service to arrive and organise evacuation.



Avoiding the Risk of Fire

Please be conscious of the risk of fire, for example, regularly check at night and before going out that appliances have been fully switched off. It is especially important that anyone who smokes in their almshouse dwelling do so responsibly and are aware of the risk of falling asleep or getting too close to curtains while smoking. Do not wedge doors open or leave chip pans unattended and use ash trays if you smoke.

Smoking in bed or in the common parts of the building is strictly forbidden. Please be considerate to others and avoid smoking in their presence as the risks associated with passive smoking are now well recognised. If you are expecting visitors, please air the room beforehand so that any smoke can dissipate.

Fire Doors

Fire doors must never be wedged or propped open.

Fire doors are designed to prevent the spread of fire and smoke throughout the building and play a vital role in protecting residents during an emergency.

Interfering with fire doors places everyone at risk and may constitute a breach of fire safety requirements.

If you notice a fire door that does not close correctly, please report it to staff immediately.

FIRE ACTION

If fire breaks out in your flat

1. Pull a cord
2. **Leave the flat** closing the doors behind you and operate the nearest fire alarm call point
3. Do not use the lifts
4. Do not stop to collect personal belongings
5. Proceed to the fire assembly point in the car park
6. Do not return to the building until you are authorised to do so.

If fire breaks out elsewhere & the alarm rings

STAY IN YOUR FLAT

You will be safer in your flat than in the corridors and we will know where to find you.

Your flat has a 30 minute fire resistance. Ensure your doors and windows are closed and wait for a member of staff or the Fire Service to come to you.

The Fire Service will help you to leave if they think it is necessary.

Getting Involved

We believe it is very important to involve you in our decision-making processes and are committed to making this happen. You are the best people to tell us what works and what doesn't and, by working together, we aim to improve the services you receive.
There are a number of opportunities for you to have your say and be involved in the housing services we provide and these vary in the amount of time and commitment we require from you.

You can be involved by:

- Contacting us with any suggestions or ideas for improvements.
- Completing the satisfaction survey we send to all residents every two years.
- Attending the regular residents meetings held at your scheme, including the annual consultation meetings.
- Representing HPLC on the resident scrutiny panel, meetings are held once a month. You will work alongside other residents from HPLC and similar housing associations.



Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements

HPLC is an almshouse charity and a private registered provider of social housing in England. Our residents occupy their homes under licences. The Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) include licensees within the definition of tenants. Holding a licence does not exclude you from STAIRs.

From 1st April 2027, a current HPLC social housing resident, or their nominated representative, may make a formal STAIRs information request. You must be identifiable and the request must be in writing, but you do not need to mention STAIRs, give a reason, or use a particular form.

Tell us what information you want and how we can contact you.
Email: info@hplc.org.uk
Post: HPLC, Hollingworth House, 109 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9AA.
Help in person: speak to any member of staff, with a private discussion available.
Help by telephone: 0121 426 1600.

If you ask verbally, staff will help put your request in writing and confirm the wording with you. We will record receipt of the written request promptly. If the request is unclear, we will work with you to clarify it and record the correspondence; we will not impose an automatic restart or suspension of the response clock.

What information you can request:
Requests can cover existing information about the management of our social housing, including repairs, property conditions, charges, occupancy rights, communal areas, estate management, anti-social behaviour, staffing and training, complaints, compensation, safety, privacy, security, energy efficiency and stock transfers. Information held by a contractor or managing agent on our behalf may also be covered.

STAIRs does not require us to create new records, answer hypothetical questions or supply information created after we received your request. Where information is not held by us and is not our information, we will explain this to you and guide you to other relevant sources, where we know of them.

Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Harborne Parish Lands Charity is committed to creating an open and non-defensive culture which acts to protect the rights of the people with whom we work. We welcome feedback of any kind.

What Is a complaint?

A complaint is distinct from a Service Request.

"A service request is a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right".

A complaint arises when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.

We follow the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code which provides the following definition of a complaint:

"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or a group of residents".

We want you to tell us when:

- We fail to deliver a service.
- You are unhappy with the standard of our service, or a service delivered on our behalf by another company, for example, a maintenance contractor.
- You are unhappy with our response when you request a service.
- You have received poor customer service or discrimination from a member of our staff or from a company acting on our behalf.
- You are unhappy about our policies or how they have been used.
- You feel you have been treated unfairly.

Whenever you express dissatisfaction, we will always give you the

choice to make a complaint.

How Do I Make A Complaint?

You can make a complaint in any way you choose:

- **In Person** – to any member of staff
- **Email** – send to Info@hplc.org.uk
- **Letter** – write to us at 109 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9AA
- **Phone** – 0121 426 1600

Complaints can be made to any member of staff. Try and speak to the person you would normally deal with, or The Head of Operations if they are unavailable.

Harborne Parish Lands Charity Housing Staff

Contacting Staff

Staff are happy to receive calls on their mobile phones during office hours, which are **9:00am to 5:00pm**.

Outside of these hours, staff mobile numbers should only be used in the event of an emergency. Non-urgent matters should be reported during normal office hours.



Steven Simpson

Chief Executive

Phone: 0121 426 1600
Email: steven.simpson@hplc.org.uk

Steven leads the charity and helps make sure everything runs smoothly behind the scenes, so you have a safe and comfortable place to call home.



Carolyn Arnold

Head of Operations

Phone: 07973 734 305
Email: carolyn.arnold@hplc.org.uk

Looks after the overall running of the Housing schemes. If you have a bigger concern or need help that the Housing Officer can't sort, Carolyn is here to help.



Dyan O'Garro

Support Officer

Phone: 07887 764 106
Email: dyan.o'garro@hplc.org.uk

Your first point of contact for help with day-to-day issues, or if you just need someone to talk to, and Dyan is here to help with anything from benefit advice to accessing other services.



Tony Whitehouse

Senior Building Manager
Harborne House & Dore House

Phone: 07773 820 689
Email: tony.whitehouse@hplc.org.uk

Takes care of the building and communal areas at Harborne House and Dore House. Tony also visits every flat once a year for a flat inspection, to ensure that your flat is maintained to our standards.



Kevin James

Senior Building Manager
Firs Close

Phone: 07867 451 988
Email: Kevin.james@hplc.org.uk

Takes care of the building and communal areas at Firs Close, making sure everything is safe, clean and in good working order.



Max Bashier

Senior Building Manager
Harborne Cottages & Larksfield

Phone: 07867 451 989
Email: max.bashier@hplc.org.uk

Takes care of the building and communal areas at Harborne Cottages and Larksfield. Max also visits every flat once a month to test the pull-cord system.



Magie Dunkley

Activity and Wellbeing Officer

Phone: 07880 039 557
Email: magie.dunkley@hplc.org.uk

Magie overall supports with physical, social and emotional wellbeing of the residents by planning and delivering a wide range of engaging activities.



Lara Albutt

Housing Officer

Phone: 07353 114 525
Email: lara.albutt@hplc.org.uk

Your main point of contact for anything to do with your home or license. Lara is friendly and here to help with questions, support, or if something isn't quite right!



Alison Littleford

Administrator

Phone: (0121) 426 1600
Email: alison.littleford@hplc.org.uk

Handles the paperwork and helps keep everything organised. Alison is often your first point-of-contact when you call or pop into the office.

Code of Conduct

All employees, contractors and the Trustees are bound by the charity's Code of Conduct. The Trustees insist that the conduct of staff, contractors and the Trustees themselves must give confidence, show integrity and must at all times avoid any suggestion of influence by improper motives.

This is so that you can be sure that all those who are connected with the Charity treat you with respect and uphold high standards of conduct and personal probity.

Our staff should give a high priority to your rights as a resident and encourage you to express your choices and preferences.

Our staff will:

- Respect your right to privacy and dignity;
- Accept that you have the right not to take advice;
- Involve you as much as possible in all decisions which impact on you directly, for example your support plan, or indirectly, for example changes in policy;
- Direct you to appropriate specialist advice if they are not qualified to help or advise you;
- Not criticise your values or beliefs;
- Generally, only provide advice if you have asked for it.

Harborne House Utilities

Location of water stopcock:

There is an external underground water stopcock outside. Inside each flat there is also a stop tap. Please ask the Building Manager to show you where it is. These should only be turned off in an emergency.

Location of electricity mains switch and fuse box:

The electricity meters are located under the staircases and in the meter cupboards nearest the flats. The consumer unit with main switch is located in a high level cupboard in the hall of each flat. An isolation switch for the Building Manager's use only is located outside each flat adjacent to the entrance door.



Larksfield Utilities

Central Heating and Hot Water

Your central heating boiler is in the kitchen. Please note the following:-

The switch on the wall adjacent to the boiler must on for the boiler to work.
There is a programmable thermostat which the Building Manager will show you how to programme it.

At the bottom of the boiler is a pull down flap, inside this is a switch. If you wish to turn OFF the heating turn the switch to HOT WATER ONLY.

Each radiator (except the bathroom) has a thermostatic radiator valve. You can use this to set the heat level in each room. High numbers more heat, low numbers less heat.
Do not put your hands under the hot water tap because it may be very hot. Always run the hot water into the sink or wash basin, together with cold water. The temperature of the hot water will be less when the tap is fully on and hotter if only partly turned on. If you have any difficulties with the central heating, contact the Building Manager.

Extractor Fan and Condensation

Your flat is well insulated and has double glazing and is sealed against draughts. However, to prevent condensation it is essential that moist air is removed and replaced by fresh air.

In the shower room there is a fan which will come automatically when there is a build up of moisture in the air. The fan can also be switched ON and OFF by pulling the cord.

In the kitchen there is a similar fan. By pulling the cord the fan can be switched to boost so that cooking smells can be removed.

In the top of each window frame is a 'trickle' ventilator. Please leave this open so as to allow fresh air to enter to replace extracted air. The window catches also have a setting will allow ventilation without allowing them to be opened from the outside.

In Flats 3 and 8 only the fan in the bathroom is wired to the lighting switch so that it comes on every time the light is switched on and runs on for a period after the light is switched off. This is because there are no windows in those bathrooms.

The large switch next to the light switch must be left on at all times it is only for isolating the fan if any work has to be carried out to it.

Gas Service

Your flat is provided with a gas supply to the central heating boiler and to the cooker point. You do not have your own meter but there is an emergency gas cut off lever sited:-

Flats 1 and 2: Kitchen, under sink.
Flat 3: Kitchen below boiler at low level in corner.
Flats 4,5,6,7,8,9 and 10: Kitchen, adjacent to boiler.

If you smell gas or think there is a problem, turn of the gas with the lever and pull the cord to tell the Monitoring Centre. Alternatively, you can telephone Transco on 0800 111 999.

Electricity Service

Your electricity meter is in the main electricity room which is only accessible from outside next to the bin store. The key to this door is with the Building Manager. If you wish to examine your meter, please contact your Building Manager.

In the hall of your flat is your own fuse board (called a consumer unit). You can gain access to the switches inside by releasing the perspex cover.

Normally all switches should be ON. If there is a fault on one of the circuits the corresponding switch will 'trip' i.e. automatically switch to the OFF position. If you are able to, look at the consumer unit to see which circuit is at fault (the circuits are marked, LIGHTING, SHOWER, KITCHEN SOCKETS, etc). Check any appliance you have been using to see that all plugs are pushed in properly and that there are no loose wires.

If the lighting circuit has tripped the commonest cause is a bulb failing. Reset the tripped switch, i.e. push up to the ON position. If you have any concern at resetting the switch, cannot reach it or if the switch trips again, contact your Building Manager.

Certain appliances in the kitchen have an unswitched socket at low level which is controlled by a switch above the worktop or at high level which has a red neon indicator to tell you that it is ON. (These are to the washing machine and refrigerator positions and to the hob in Flats 1, 2, 4, &5).

All the appliances in the kitchen are the property of the Charity and cannot be removed without our consent.

In the airing cupboard there is a small electric heater for airing (not drying) clothes. Remember to switch off if you are not using it.

In the lounge and in some cupboards there is a switch spur with a neon indicator. These are spare and do not control anything. If you wanted to provide your own electric fire in the lounge, this spur could be used, but it must be wired by a qualified electrician.

Water Service

You have your own individual water supply which is metered. Your meter is situated in the pavement beneath a cover, together with the stop valves. Locations are as follows:-

Flats 1 and 6, 3 and 8	Windmill Lane
Flats 2 and 7, 4 and 9	Hume Street
Flats 5 and 10	Suffrage Street

The number of the flat is marked on the underside of the cover.

If you have a problem with a leak inside your flat, turn the water OFF at your stop valve and notify the Building Manager.

Water stop cock locations are as follows:-

Flats 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, & 9:	Airing Cupboard
Flats 5 and 10:	Shower room by WC.

If the water is turned off you will not be able to draw any hot water.

Dore House Utilities

Gas Service

There is a central gas boiler in the cellar which serves all the flats in Dore House. If you smell gas or think there is a problem, pull the cord immediately.

Electricity Service

Your electricity meter is in the cellar. The cellar must be kept locked for safety reasons. The Building Manager has a key so if you wish to examine your meter, please contact the Building Manager.

In a cupboard in your flat is your own distribution board (consumer unit). You can gain access to the switches inside by releasing the perspex cover.

Normally all switches should be ON. If there is a fault on one of the circuits the corresponding switch will 'trip' i.e. automatically switch to the OFF position. If you are able to, look at the consumer unit to see which circuit is at fault (the circuits are marked LIGHTING, SHOWER, KITCHEN SOCKETS, etc.). Check any appliance you have been using to see that all plugs are pushed in properly and that there are no loose wires. If a switch has tripped let the Building Manager know at the soon as possible.

If the lighting circuit has tripped, the commonest cause is a bulb failing. Reset the tripped switch, i.e. push up to the ON position. If the switch trips again, contact the Building Manager. (If you have any concerns about resetting the switch or cannot reach it, contact the Building Manager or pull the cord).

Water Service

The flats at Dore House do not have individual water meters. The supply to the whole building is metered and the bill is paid by HPLC. To access your stop cock see the Building Manager. If you have a leak pull the cord.

Central Heating and Hot Water

The temperature is controlled by the thermostatic valves on the radiators. There are no other controls or time clock. Each radiator (except the bathroom) has a thermostatic radiator valve. You can use this to set the heat level in each room. High numbers give more heat, low numbers less heat.

If you have any difficulties with the central heating, contact the Building Manager.

Extractor Fans and Condensation

Your flat is highly insulated and has double glazing and is sealed against draughts. However, to prevent condensation it is essential that moist air is removed and replaced by fresh air.

In the shower room there is a fan which will come automatically when there is a build up of moisture in the air. The fan is also switched on and off when the light cord is pulled.

In the kitchen there is a similar fan. By pushing the light switch the fan can be switched to boost so that cooking smells can be removed.

In the top of each window frame is a 'trickle' ventilator, try to have it open so as to allow fresh air to enter to replace extracted air.



Harborne Cottages Utilities

Location of water stopcock

The cold water stop cock is located under the kitchen sink. The hot water stopcock is in the airing cupboard. Please ask the Building Manager to show you where they are. These should only be turned off in an emergency.

Location of electricity mains switch and fuse box.

The electricity meter and consumer unit are located in a cupboard in the living room near the bay window.

Location of gas stop cock

This is under the kitchen sink.



Firs Close Utilities

Location of water stopcock:

There is an external underground water stopcock outside. Inside each flat there is also a stop tap. Please ask the Building Manager to show you where it is. These should only be turned off in an emergency.

Location of electricity mains switch and fuse box:

The electricity meters are located under the staircases and in the meter cupboards nearest the flats. The consumer unit with main switch is located in a high level cupboard in the hall of each flat. An isolation switch for the Building Manager's use only is located outside each flat adjacent to the entrance door.

