



Thornley & Ferens House
Residents' Handbook

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Section 1

Welcome

Welcome to your new home. This handbook sets out useful information and explains your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to us if you need further information on any matters.

This handbook is intended to supplement the rules and regulations given in your Licence Agreement which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend these rules and regulations from time to time, you will be given notice of any changes to your terms and conditions beforehand.

All residents are requested to respect the privacy of other residents and are entitled to enjoy their home in peaceful privacy. Whilst some may enjoy socialising you are not obliged to participate in any social activities.

When you move into your home the Housing & Estates Co-ordinator will ensure that you are familiar with:

- Action to be taken in the event of a fire.
- How to operate all the equipment in your home.
- Central heating, emergency call systems and front door entry systems.

Contacts

For all enquiries, please call Ramsey House Reception on 0191 372 2551. This service is available Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm.

Out of office hours **emergency only**, please call Beddell House on 0191 372 0421. This number should only be used out of hours when you have a property emergency that a contractor is able to repair. An emergency is any defect which puts health, safety, or security of residents at risk, or which seriously affects the structure of the building. For examples of emergencies see page 8.

Please note not all emergencies can be fixed by contractors please see other useful numbers below:

National Grid Emergency Number: 105

Gas or Carbon Monoxide Leak Emergency Number: 0800 111 999

Northumbria Water Emergency: 0800 393 084

Emergency Services (Police, Ambulance, Fire): 999

Non-emergency medical number: 111

Non-emergency police number: 101

Our history

Sherburn House Charity was founded by Bishop of Durham Hugh Pudsey (Hugh le Puiset) as 'Christ's Hospital in Sherburn' around 1181. Its original purpose was as a leper hospital for 'up to 65 leprous monks and nuns'.

To commemorate the 800th Anniversary of the Charity in 1981, the Governors commissioned Dr. Clifton W. Gibby to write a short history. A full text of this history is available on our website at www.sherburnhouse.org and printed copies can be found in the communal area of Thornley House.

Almshouses

Almshouses are charitable independent living accommodation for people in need.

Acceptance criteria

- Applicants must be aged 55+
- Must be able to live independently
- Must be of retirement age
- Must have a connection to the County of Durham
- Must meet eligibility requirements as per the Licence agreement or must have a financial or social need

Section 2 – Health and Safety

Emergency Call System

Although you are required to live independently you may wish to obtain support from external agencies. There are several care companies in the area that will provide domiciliary care and Durham County Council provide a care connect system which is an alarm that operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week. You will have received some information about care connect in your information file given to you on arrival.

If you do not have this facility, you should call the appropriate emergency services of Police, Fire Brigade, or Ambulance by phoning 999.

Fire Precautions

Fire policies are frequently reviewed, and a fire alarm test is carried out every Thursday. Fire Drills will be carried out at least once a year to ensure that every resident knows what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency.

All the accommodation are fitted with smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. If a resident is hard of hearing, please contact the housing & Estates Coordinator for advice.

Evacuation Policy: When you hear the fire alarm, follow the fire procedure. If it is safe to do so, please evacuate the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point one of which is at the front of Ferens House, one at the front of Thornley House, these are clearly marked with a green assembly point sign. The exit routes and fire escapes are clearly marked with green and white directional signs in the corridors. Shut the door of your flat behind you and do not attempt to take any personal belongings with you. Wear warm clothing and leave your flat immediately.

Security

The keypad entry system is installed for security purposes. Only open the door for someone you know. Any other callers should be directed to reception at Ramsey House.

Family and visitors should use the keypad entry doors to enter the building. Fire Doors should remain closed and only used in an emergency.

Keys

The Charity 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 consent as these may delay access for emergency services.

Please do not obtain extra keys without the Charity's permission.

A £30.00 charge will apply for lost/replacement keys.

Central Heating & Frost Protection

All homes have central heating, in extremely cold weather, serious damage can be caused in pipes, cisterns, sinks and basins by the expansion of water when it freezes. This can result in bursts when the thaw comes.

In order to protect against burst pipes, you should endeavour to keep your home warm. If you are away from your home, please let us know so we can monitor it for you.

Stopcock & Fuse boxes

A stopcock is located under your kitchen sink, this will be shown to you when you move in.

	Thornley	Ferens
Electricity Meter Location	Locked boiler room at rear of Thornley and Shincliffe	Front door porch cupboard on right hand side
Electricity Mains Switch Location	In the cupboard outside flat 5	Under the staircase in the corridor cupboard opposite flat 3

The fuse box is located in your apartment and will be shown to you on arrival.

Ferens House telephone connection points are in a locked cupboard in the hallway outside flats 2 and 3.

If required, keys are available for all areas from the Maintenance Team or from the Care Home out of hours.

Section 3 – Terms of Occupancy

Licence Agreement

Your Licence Agreement, of which you have a copy, explains that you occupy the property as a beneficiary of the Charity. This means that you are not a tenant. Your Licence Agreement is subject to review, at least annually or more often depending on your circumstances. If your circumstances change your licence agreement may be revoked. Examples of this include:

- A resident was no longer able to look after themselves safely or to live independently, even with the help of Adult Social Care services or family support.
- Non-payment of weekly charges.
- Unreasonable and anti-social behaviour towards other residents or members of staff.
- The resident's financial circumstances have improved, and they no longer qualify to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary.

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the Charity with accurate and complete information of their financial circumstances and that residents inform us if their circumstances change. However, residents should be assured that only in the most unusual circumstances would this lead to someone being asked to leave.

The Charity would only terminate a licence agreement as a last resort after every effort had been made to resolve the issues. If, having been asked to leave, every assistance to find alternative accommodation will be given.

Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

Weekly maintenance contributions are payable on the 24th of each month and is payable one month in advance. You are required to set up a standing order as cash is not permitted. If you receive Housing Benefit, arrangements can be made for payment to be paid directly into the Charity's bank account.

The amount you pay includes a contribution towards the cost of managing and maintaining your property and the upkeep of the grounds.

For example, items covered by the WMC include:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Landscaping and Gardening
- Water and Sewerage services to the property
- Building Insurance

Consulting Residents

The Charity will consult residents on any changes to their terms and conditions or in respect of the maintenance and repair of their property.

Absence from Home

If you leave your property unattended at any time, please inform the Housing & Estates Coordinator of your contact phone number. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the Charity immediately you get home as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

The property must be your principal and permanent residence and must be occupied as your main home. If the Charity becomes aware that the property is not your main home this may result in your licence being revoked.

If you plan to be away from your dwelling for an extended period, such as going on Holiday, you must inform the Housing and Estates Co-ordinator.

If you are admitted to hospital, we would be grateful if you or your Next of Kin could inform us, so we can ensure that your property remains safe.

Please ensure that all food has been disposed of in the outside bin, taps and appliances have been fully switched off and windows shut. If you are leaving your flat during the winter months, please discuss with the Housing & Estates Coordinator how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes.

Central heating, electricity, and hot water

The Charity undertakes all meter readings wherever possible, depending on your accommodation. This will be explained when you move in.

Improvements to your Home

You must **not** carry out any improvements, alterations, repairs, or decoration to your home without obtaining permission.

You will be consulted prior to any planned maintenance to your home, however, in the event of an emergency we have the right to enter your property to undertake emergency repairs.

Employment

Neither the accommodation nor the grounds may be used as a place of business, this includes storing items connected with running a business.

Visitors – Family and Friends

Visitors are not permitted to stay in any properties overnight, except with the consent of the Charity, this is for fire safety reasons. Licensees are responsible for their visitors whilst on the premises.

Visitors must adhere to the same code of conduct as residents.

Pets

The Charity has a Pet Policy; you must seek permission to have a pet in your property. A copy of the policy is available on request.

Moving Out

If you intend to vacate the accommodation, you must give at least 28 days' notice, in line with your licence agreement. During this notice period you will be liable for your Weekly Maintenance Charge payments even if you have already moved out. Residents or, their personal representatives, are responsible for Weekly Maintenance Charges until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and all keys are returned.

If a resident were to leave their home without giving notice, they will be liable for paying their Weekly Maintenance Charge and all utilities until the end of the notice period.

The Charity have the right to start the process of eviction in the event of non-payment of Weekly Maintenance Charges.

Re-Housing

The Charity may require you to move to another of the Charity's properties when major repair work is being carried out, or for some other unforeseen reason. Wherever possible you will be given 3 months' notice however in emergency situations this may not be possible. If you are asked to move, we will pay your removal costs.

Gifts and Legacies

It is the Charity's policy that any person involved in the running of the Charity should not accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you wish to donate anything to the Charity, please contact the reception. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Section 4 – Services Provided

Maintenance

The Maintenance team look after the building and grounds from 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday. If you have a maintenance requirement, please contact the Housing & Estates Coordinator at Ramsey House on 0191 372 2551.

Repairs and Maintenance Procedure

All repair work that is the Charity's responsibility should be reported promptly in the first instance to the team based in Ramsey House.

Repairs are prioritised according to their nature and urgency. An indication of the timeframe for repairs is:

Priority 1	Emergency	Within 24 hours
For Example: Flooding, major fault with electrical supply, storm damage, heating loss, gas or carbon monoxide leak, total loss of water, major structural damage, serious issues with damp and mould.		
Priority 2	Urgent	A repair which significantly affects the comfort or convenience of the resident - within 5-7 days
For Example: Plumbing leaks, blocked sink/waste, overflowing toilet, heating or hot water faults, minor electrical faults, minor roof leaks, security of doors and windows, unsafe flooring.		
Priority 3	Non-Urgent	Repairs which can safely wait to be dealt with within 4-8 weeks
For example: Routine repairs to doors windows and floors, repairs to external fences, minor plumbing repairs e.g. dripping taps, other minor day to day repairs/replacement.		

Please note the timescales are approximate according to the availability of contractors.

An emergency is any defect which puts health, safety, or security of residents at risk, or which seriously affects the structure of the building.

We have a maintenance assistant on site for minor repairs, and we use a small network of locally based contractors to carry out specialist work such as plumbing and electrical works. The service they provide is excellent and they are regularly monitored to ensure high standards are maintained. Although we strive to carry out repairs as soon as possible, it is not always possible for contractors to call out the same day.

Communal Lounge

There is a Communal Lounge for the use of Thornley House residents and their visitors. Residents are responsible for their visitors at all times. The Communal Lounge is a useful space for social gatherings but please be considerate of others in the building.

Furniture and Fittings

Your accommodation is offered unfurnished, please refer to schedule 1 of your licence agreement for an inventory of any fitted appliances in your accommodation. You are required to leave everything in good decorative state. You may be recharged for any damage caused by neglect or carelessness.

Gardens

Maintenance of outdoor communal areas is the responsibility of the Charity. We use a landscaping contractor on site to carry out routine work. We also arrange for tree surgeons for more specialist work.

For safety reasons please do not walk over wooded areas when contractors are on site as they often use heavy machinery.

Insurance

The Charity has an insurance policy to cover the buildings.

This does not cover resident's contents; you are strongly advised to take out appropriate insurance of your own to cover your contents.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than is necessary to meet day-to-day expenses and keep valuables out of sight.

Television

The properties within the grounds benefit from a concessionary TV licence. The cost of this licence is currently £7.50 per year. The Charity will add you to this licence when you move in.

To qualify you must be 60 years old or over. If you're in paid work, this must be for no more than 15 hours per week. You can only work for more than 15 hours per week if you've had an ARC Concessionary TV Licence since 31 March 2004.

Or over 55 years old if 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.

The Charity will apply for concessionary licences on behalf of the residents.

NB you are responsible to cancel your previously held TV Licence once you have a concessionary licence.

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own accommodation clean, including internal windows. External window cleaning is the responsibility of the Charity.

Cleaning the communal areas is the responsibility of the Charity and the cost of this service will form part of the weekly maintenance contribution. You will be advised when contractors are coming to clean the outside of the windows of your accommodation.

Refuse collection and recycling

Refuse is normally collected on Friday each week. There are bins available to use in a central collection point. If you require additional items such as recycling boxes or one-off collections this should be arranged directly with Durham County Council.

Telephones

You are responsible for installing a telephone in your flat through your chosen provider.

Please refer to your information pack on arrival for the system relevant to your property.

NB If you are transferring a number which has been on a copper line then you need to advise it is to be moved to the new fibre digital service.

Section 5 – General Information

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. You may be entitled to discounts/subsidies, please contact the council for payment details.

Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance

If your income drops significantly during your residency, you could be entitled to Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance to help with your housing costs.

To claim Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance you should ask for an application form at your local Benefits Office (DWP) or Housing Department. 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.

Parking

Please do not park in unauthorised places, or allow your visitors to do so, as their cars may block the way for ambulances or fire engines attending in an emergency.

Parking is available behind Thornley House in marked parking bays and at the side of Ferens. Please keep the bay in front of the garage next to Ferens free for maintenance access. Parking on the main road is not allowed as it can block other traffic such as deliveries.

Social Activities

A welcome sense of community can result from residents taking part in social activities together. Friendships grow and there is a greater readiness to support one another through difficult times. We find that some residents enjoy occasional opportunities to do things together, while others prefer to pursue their interests on their own. There is no pressure therefore to take part in organised activities.

Residents Meetings

A quarterly Residents meeting will be held in Thornley House communal room. Minutes from the previous meeting and dates of the next meeting will be available on the notice board. This is an opportunity to get to know you better, provide any updates and to address any issues and concerns. Meetings are informal and friendly. Please do not wait for a meeting to discuss any complaints, these will be addressed outside the meeting.

Compliments, Complaints or Minor Issues

If you have any compliments, complaints, or minor issues, please bring them to the attention of the Housing and Estates Co-ordinator. In most cases, minor issues can be dealt with informally, quickly, and efficiently and to the resident's satisfaction. We can only resolve problems and improve the service if you speak up when things go wrong.

The Charity also has a complaints policy and procedure which is available on request.