

# The French Hospital

## Notes for Applicants for Almshouse Accommodation

October 2015



Dear Applicant,

### INTRODUCTION

1. These notes should be read in conjunction with information on the website [www.frenchhospital.org.uk](http://www.frenchhospital.org.uk)
2. The French Hospital is a Registered Charity established under Royal Charter, which was granted in 1718. The original purpose of the charity was the relief of the Huguenot refugees who fled from France to Great Britain. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II granted a supplemental Charter in 2015.
3. The French Hospital now achieves its objectives mainly by the provision of Almshouse accommodation in a square called La Providence, which is situated just off the High Street in Rochester, Kent.

### LA PROVIDENCE

4. The buildings in “the Square” are owned by the French Hospital and comprise some 60 flats for Almshouse residents, with a Common Room and an administrative office. The staff comprises a Clerk, Mr I.W. Mackenzie, a resident Steward (warden), Mr Jon Corrigan, who lives at No 41, La Providence and a Fundraising Manager, Mrs Vanessa Weddell (née Miller). Also in the team are a number of dedicated Deputy Stewards. In addition, The French Hospital has an affiliated Chaplain, Revd. H. Daubney who assists where required and officiates at Holy Communion in the Common Room each Wednesday.
5. The French Hospital is ‘sheltered accommodation’, each flat being provided with a 24-hour Voice Emergency Communication System (which directly alerts the duty Steward) in the event of an emergency. This requires residents to have their own BT telephone line, for which they pay in the normal way.
6. Most of the flats consist of a living room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, however there are a small number of 2-bedroom flats. Some of the flats have been fitted with wide doors etc. to facilitate use by disabled persons and most of the bathrooms now have walk-in showers instead of baths for the same reason. Not all accommodation is on the ground floor or accessible by lift.
7. All flats have 24-hour hot water and central heating for which residents only pay approximately **£30 per month**. This cannot be claimed by Housing benefit recipients.
8. Residents who are over 60 are eligible for concessionary TV licences that will be paid for by The French Hospital. Those residents who are over 75 are entitled to a free TV licence.
9. The French Hospital is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings, but residents are expected to provide their own carpets, curtains and furniture. They are also expected to maintain the interior of their flats in good decorative order.

### THE COSTS

10. The flats are provided as Almshouse accommodation and residents occupy them under licence from the French Hospital. The normal rights of tenancy do not apply.

11. An Almshouse contribution, based on a percentage of the 'fair rent' assessed by the local authority, is required for each flat according to its size and location. The contributions, **which are payable by monthly Banker's Order, range from approximately £400-£525 per calendar month.** If appropriate the local authority will pay housing benefit. The contributions payable to the French Hospital are deemed to be rent for this purpose. The Directors review the level of contributions annually.

12. For safety reasons all flats have only electric cooking points. Residents are responsible for their own electricity bills.

13. Residents are required to pay their own Council Tax (**approximately £120 per month**) direct to Medway Council.

### **LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

14. The French Hospital and its employees do not undertake to provide any domestic or medical assistance. Residents are regarded as private individuals living in private flats who have to make their own arrangements for doctors, visiting nurses, carers, home help, meals-on-wheels etc. The Steward will advise and assist as necessary.

15. One or two furnished flats are available for the temporary accommodation of visitors. A small donation (**£20 per night**) is welcomed for the use and upkeep of these flats.

16. There are some traditional rules laid down in the Charter for the French Hospital. The main points affecting residents are:

- a. **The Property.** Residents may not make any alterations to the property without prior consent of the Clerk
- b. **The Neighbours.** Residents should respect the privacy of other residents and avoid causing any disturbance or annoyance.
- c. **Car Parking.** Space in the La Providence Square is limited to collecting and returning residents to their flats. It is also very important that the emergency services, especially the ambulance and fire brigade, have easy access to the flats. For these reasons long term or overnight parking is not permitted in the Square. However residents who have cars are usually able to hire lock-up garages nearby and there are several public car parks within walking distance of the accommodation. In addition there is limited space available for residents to park their cars in adjoining property owned by the French Hospital. A small administrative charge of **£40 per month** is made for this service and there is a returnable deposit of **£40** for the remote control device.
- d. **Pets.** 'Well-behaved' cats, birds and fish are permitted, but dogs are not encouraged. A new resident who has a dog may bring it with him/her to live in La Providence, and, unless it causes problems, keep it for the rest of its days. Generally speaking dogs may not be replaced and new dogs may not be brought to the French Hospital.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

17. It is a condition laid down in the Charter that "Primary Beneficiaries" (residents) must show, to the satisfaction of the Directors, that they (or their spouse) are of French protestant (Huguenot) descent and now reside in Great Britain. Beneficiaries must also show that they are in need of assistance due to age, ill health, financial need or other misfortune, giving rise to a charitable need.

18. A family tree showing an applicant's relationship to a known French protestant is generally the start point for those wishing to be considered as Primary Beneficiaries. The Clerk to the French Hospital holds only limited information, mainly related to former residents; applicants who have difficulty in establishing their ancestry should in the first instance obtain assistance from the Honorary Secretary of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland. See <http://www.huguenotsociety.org.uk/contact.html>

19. The Directors may accept other applicants as "Beneficiaries" of the Charity (residents) if they are in need of assistance due to age, ill health, financial need or other misfortune, giving rise to a charitable need. But they will, in most cases, give preference to "Primary Beneficiaries".

20. There is no minimum or maximum financial requirement for residence. In practice applicants with very low incomes are able to obtain sufficient assistance from the local authority to pay the normal contributions.

21. It is expected that residents will have reached retirement age, but a younger person would be considered if his or her circumstances indicate a special need.

#### **LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY AND WILL**

22. The Directors ask that you arrange to appoint one or more persons who have Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) before you take up residence in La Providence. Lasting Powers of Attorney under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 make it possible for people to appoint one or more legally authorised persons to look after their affairs should they become incapable of doing so themselves. Different people can be appointed for different purposes, as Lasting Powers of Attorney come in two types – "Health / Welfare" and "Property / Financial Affairs". The former allows the chosen representative(s) to take decisions about health, residence, and other welfare matters. This is desirable but optional as far as the Directors are concerned. The Directors do however require that a Property/Financial Affairs LPA is in place.

23. We also ask that all residents have an up to date Will before moving to the French Hospital.

#### **APPLICATIONS**

24. The application form should be completed and sent to:

**Ian Mackenzie**  
**Clerk at The French Hospital**  
**41 La Providence**  
**Rochester**  
**Kent**  
**ME1 1NB**

When completing the form, please note the following points:

- a. If married, give full names and, if appropriate, the date of birth of your spouse. Copies of birth and marriage certificates are required.
- b. If applying as a Primary Beneficiary, give full details of your family tree etc. The more evidence you produce, the easier it will be for the Directors to consider your case.

c. Give a full account of the circumstances that give rise to your charitable need. The more details you provide, the easier it will be for the Directors to consider your case.

d. Give your doctor's name, full postal address and telephone number. This is because the French Hospital's medical advisor requires a written medical report before final acceptance.

25. The Directors will consider your application. When they are satisfied that the evidence warrants further progress you will be invited to a meeting with the Officers (a small number of selected Directors), at La Providence. This meeting will enable you to see the type of accommodation provided and allow the Officers to discuss any points which might require clarification before a final decision is taken.

26. The decision to grant or refuse an application is made by the Directors. Their decision is final and they are under no obligation to give reasons for any decision they may reach.

27. I do hope you find these notes useful and informative. Before arrival each new resident is given a 'Resident's Handbook' which expands on many of the subjects mentioned above; however if you would like clarification on any matter please do not hesitate to contact either me or the Steward.

We look forward to welcoming you to La Providence.

Yours sincerely,

*Ian Mackenzie*

I.W. Mackenzie  
Clerk to the Corporation