



STRATEGY
2024-2028:
DO MORE,
DO BETTER



**A great team all
working together for
the best result for the
residents at CAC.**

**Michelle Jupe,
Wellbeing Coordinator**

ELIS DAVID ALMSHOUSES

INTRODUCTION

Croydon Almshouses (CA) is the oldest charity in Croydon and we are proud of our heritage. For over 550 years in Croydon we have been supporting people who are in need. We are excited about our new strategy which aims to take us into the next chapter by expanding our operations to enhance our impact in our communities.



In 2022/23, having steered the charity through the global COVID-19 pandemic and protected staff and residents from the most serious impacts, we began to think about our future plans and how we could do more and do better. In consultation with key stakeholders, we embarked on a strategy development process to assess the external context we are working in, the challenges people are facing and assessing the evidence as to how we could make a positive difference to more people's lives.

The results include a name change and brand which reflects who we are now, a new governance model so that we are more efficient and our 2024-2028 Strategy *Do More, Do Better*. The underpinning belief of our strategy is that the impact of poverty deprives too many people in Croydon of their dignity and independence. Our work over the next five years will be informed by a commitment to increase our impact in Croydon and driven by evidence of where we can be most effective.



We are privileged to be a self-supporting charity with a relatively stable financial position and want to use the ability this affords us to provide security, support, opportunity and community by working in partnership for the people of Croydon.

As a small charity there is a limit to what we achieve but we can and will do our best to improve the lives of the increasing number of people who are in need of support.

We look forward to meeting you as we strive to *Do More, Do Better.*

Martin Evans (Chair)



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Evans".

Hayley James (CEO)



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hayley James".



Applying for funding from Croydon Almshouses was an easy and rewarding process. We were given ongoing support throughout the application and our project was a great success and greatly impacted all involved.

Mrs Burney's Bee Club

WHO WE ARE

Historically we have been a low-profile charity, helping people behind the scenes, and so we started the process of developing a new strategy by acknowledging all that we have achieved. Helping people in need for us has mainly been in the form of almshouses, and we now provide high quality accommodation for over 60 older people across our almshouses in Croydon.

We go further and offer holistic, person-centred, dynamic support to the older people who live in our almshouses so that they can live independently for as long as possible.

We offer those residents, along with our staff and Trustees, the opportunity to be part of our Almshouse community. This means somewhere secure to live, connection with other people and a programme of activities and events in "The Lounge" in our Elis David Almshouses in South Croydon.



Almshouses are a charitable form of self-sufficient, low cost community housing that is held in trust for local people in housing need.

**THE ALMSHOUSE
ASSOCIATION**



Staff are very approachable. Can't do enough for you. Always smiling.

Resident

We also are a grantmaker, funding our increasingly over-stretched voluntary and community sector (VCS). For over 40 years we have awarded grants to charitable organisations across Croydon enabling them to deliver their crucial services, as well as awarding small grants to individuals.

We are self-funding through the Monthly Maintenance Contributions (equivalent to rent) from our residents and income from our commercial and residential investment properties and accumulated investment funds.

Whilst we hold our commercial and residential properties for the purposes of generating income for our charitable objects, we are committed to ensuring our residential properties are maintained to a high standard and that we enable our business tenants to be successful in their endeavours.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

We have considered how over the next five years we expand our operations to support more people. As we had these discussions, we identified our main drivers.

1 Our Heritage

Our principal benefactor from 1447, Elis David, wanted to help people in need. We want to further build on his legacy to do good in our communities, because we are in the privileged position of having the resources to make an impact, like he did. Our next five years are grounded in honouring our heritage which is the commitment to help people “in need”, or as today we would say “living in poverty”.

We are part of The Almshouse Association which unites 1600 independent almshouses across the UK with the shared and historical values of activism, individualism and community. These values have been woven throughout our decision-making about our next steps.



2 How we can make the most difference – the evidence

We explored the underlying factors that cause people to be in the most need; the most prevalent and significant of these is poverty. Poverty is the cause of so much suffering and inequality and often triggers and exacerbates a downward spiral of difficult lives and increasingly poor outcomes for those who

experience it. We drew on the research of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) into the causes, impact and solutions of poverty. JRF's evidence-based assertion that better jobs, better housing and better social security would bring about the most significant improvement for people in their lives was fundamental to deciding our focus over the next five years.

3 A commitment to do the most with what we have – our impact

We are in the fortunate position of being a financially stable and sustainable organisation. We take seriously our responsibility to ensure the most effective use of our resources in the short-term and the long-term.

We are in the process of developing a *theory of change* approach which will underpin our future work. We want to ensure that we are investing our charitable funds in ways that achieve the greatest impact and this approach will help us to do this.





Staff are always available to lend support and help. They are friendly and compassionate.

Resident

4 The external landscape

Our main beneficiaries are older people and whilst we are not a provider of statutory adult social care, in practice we do provide 'extra care' daily to some of our residents through our dedicated Wellbeing Team. It is accepted that there needs to be better joined up working between health and social care so that people can live independently, with personal choice, in their

own homes for longer with less time in hospital. We want to continue to contribute to that being possible for older people across Croydon by building on what we currently do for our residents and broadening it out to provide much needed support to older people not living in our almshouses.

5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We recognise that EDI should be at the heart of all we do; we embrace it and want it to be meaningful. For us equality means fairness and equality of opportunity; diversity means recognising, respecting and celebrating each other's differences; inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued and has a voice that is listened to.

We are on our journey of manifesting our good intentions and part of this is our approach for supporting our residents and staff which is underpinned by these principles:

- **person-centred:** we respond to every person we have contact with as an individual
- **dynamic:** we are proactive and find creative solutions
- **holistic:** we consider physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs



In delivering all areas of our existing work and the new initiatives set out in this strategy we will endeavour to ensure our resources and efforts are directed at those in our communities with the greatest levels of need, and are delivered in the most inclusive way. This includes developing and implementing an EDI Strategy.

VISION, PURPOSE, VALUES

Our conversations and reflections during the strategy development process and our subsequent discussions on how we could embed impact at the core of how we work led us to re-focus our Vision, our Purpose and our Values.

We started by identifying the problem: the impact of poverty deprives too many people in Croydon of their dignity and independence.

From this, we were able to focus our Vision: Thriving communities where everyone can live with dignity and independence.

Our part in achieving this Vision, which is our Purpose, is: To make the best use of our resources and our agility to reduce the impact of poverty on people in Croydon.



VISION

Thriving
communities
where everyone
can live with
dignity and
independence

PURPOSE

To make the best use of
our resources and our
agility to reduce the
impact of poverty on
people in Croydon.

VALUES

Integrity
Compassion
Inclusiveness
Openness
Sustainability
Excellence

OUR GOALS

Underpinning our efforts to improve the lives of as many people as we reasonably can are five goals, the first of which is a necessary foundation for the success of all the others.



Working at Croydon Almshouses allows me to make a meaningful difference in our residents' lives every day.

MacLaine Adler,
Wellbeing &
Projects Manager

FOUNDATION GOAL – WE WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Cross-sector working

We have been a humble and modest charity quietly helping older people and grant making to other charities, but working mostly on our own. However, we recognise that working in partnership, being collaborative, is the most likely way to achieve greater success. We acknowledge that working in partnership is not always easy and requires commitment, but we know it is likely to lead to more impactful outcomes for beneficiaries. We will retain our humility but we will become more vocal and more visible, founded on our growing reputation as an impactful organisation. Often this will be with and alongside similarly committed partners. The aim is that this will lead to more people living dignified and independent lives.

We have already started to do this and have productive and friendly relationships with colleagues in the VCS, public and private sectors. It is clear that, if our efforts are to bring about the greatest possible

good and impact all sectors, then everyone needs to bring their strengths and resources to the table and work as a team. If corporate social responsibility, statutory responsibilities and not-for-profit expertise can effectively work together, communities could be transformed for the benefit of everyone.

Join the voices campaigning for equality

We aim to become a voice for, and join those already speaking out on behalf of, local people experiencing the effects of poverty. As our work expands in the coming years, we will play our part in campaigning to improve services, policy and equality of access and opportunity for the communities in Croydon.

HERITAGE GOAL – WE WILL PROVIDE SECURITY

Homes are our history. We are proud that since 1447 we have been providing housing security for people in need. In 2021 we appointed a Property & Estates Manager as we recognised that we needed a focussed resource to properly manage our property and estates, including the ongoing major refurbishment programmes in both our almshouses and our residential properties.

Over the next five years we will:

Complete our Almshouse Refurbishment Programme

We have invested almost £1m refurbishing our almshouses and we encourage our residents to choose their own colour walls and carpets in their bedroom, hallway and living room in line with our person-centred approach. Kitchens and bathrooms are neutral and modern to allow for changing residents with minimal cost as we are always conscious of using our charitable funds wisely.

Complete our Helder Street Improvement Programme

We own twelve houses in Helder Street, as part of our portfolio of investment properties, and it was a priority for us to bring the homes to a standard that we could be proud of. We have undertaken a number of immediate improvements and are in the process of delivering actions in response to the Stock Condition Surveys we carried out on each property to continue to be an excellent landlord, providing high quality and secure accommodation.



“
The almshouses are very secure. Excellent alarms systems in place.

Resident

Provide more homes

We will proactively identify opportunities that will increase the number of almshouses we can offer, with the aim of offering more support to local people.

We have finite resources which we must protect to safeguard the long-term future of the charity, but we will be proactive and opportunistic about potential development sites and purchasing fit-for-purpose properties.



IMPROVING LIVES GOAL - WE WILL OFFER SUPPORT

We already support people and invest in staff who are trained to do so effectively. We know we are filling gaps that exist because of years of underfunding in the social care system which is now fundamentally broken. The problem is most acute for those without resources or assets of their own as they do not have the option of self-funding.

Over the next five years we will:

Lead the delivery of the Croydon-focussed Older People Deserve Better: Call to Action (OPDB)

In 2022 we funded the OPDB report because we wanted a cross-sector report to pin down what was going well, what was not going well, the landscape we were operating in and arguably most importantly, put out a call to action to those of us committed to doing the best for older people. This was published in 2023 and 2024 will see the exploration and implementation of those recommendations which CA will endeavour to make sure happen, in partnership.



Pilot and deliver Croydon Cares

Croydon Cares is a project which aims to replicate the dedicated support our almshouse residents receive, for individuals who are wanting or having to live independently in their own homes but may be finding it challenging. This can be particularly true of those on lower incomes and/ or benefits who can not afford help, and those who may be dealing with difficult life circumstances without a support network.

Underpinning Croydon Cares will be a micro-enterprise (sole trader or very small company) model which is being delivered in partnership with Croydon Council. Developing and managing a micro-enterprise approach to offer personal care and home support services to

people in their own homes will reduce costs for people, support people who receive direct payments and stimulate the local economy. Alongside this, a Wellbeing Co-ordinator will offer support to actively take part in the local community.

Explore setting-up a low-cost Counselling Service

The availability of appropriate support for people living with a mental health problem is a fundamental factor in people being able to exist comfortably in society and fulfil their potential. Cost excludes many people from accessing short and long-term therapies and we want to be part of the change that means more people can get help. At our Elis David Almshouses site we have a space which we may convert into a therapy hub if it will best serve the community and groups who support those who need it.

Explore how we might improve access to nursery provision

We know that access to affordable and good quality childcare benefits both parents and children through

removing a major barrier to employment for parents whilst their children can thrive within a safe and stimulating environment. Evidence tells us that a child's experiences in their early years, both positive and negative, can lead to correspondingly significant outcomes in later life.

CA is a family-friendly organisation. We implement policies which allow our staff to meet their family commitments and still have an enjoyable professional life. Our approach helps mitigate the financial and logistical challenge for working parents and we want to be able to offer this to more families.

If our aspirations to grow are realised we will be employing more people and it is likely that many of them will have child care responsibilities that they need to juggle alongside their paid work. To support those potential future employees and their families, we will explore setting up a nursery which supports shift workers and low-income workers so that they too can have good childcare whilst enjoying work and fulfilling their own potential.

ENABLING OTHERS GOAL - WE WILL CHAMPION COMMUNITY

Over the next five years we will:

Review our grants programmes to deliver more impact

Our Croydon Relief in Need grant programme has been awarding grants to the VCS for 40 years and we will continue to do so. Our review started in 2023 with reducing our grant rounds from four to two per year to reduce the administrative burden on CA. This will enable our Community Development Lead to work with some groups more closely to consider the evidence-base for the application and help shape meaningful outcomes underpinned by a theory of change approach.



Explore 'Rejuvenating The Lounge' and realise its potential to be a welcoming space for more people

At Elis David Almshouses we have a spacious lounge where our residents can socialise. In the coming years we will develop the space to continue to be used by our residents but open it out to our wider community. The additional benefit for our residents will be that those who find it more difficult to get out and about will have a vibrant space on their doorstep.

Take steps to deliver our commitment to environmental sustainability

The world is facing a climate crisis. All organisations need to play their part in the battle against climate change. Unless we do so, life will look very different for people and levels of need will become acute.

CA is early on its journey of sustainability and aspires to become a local example of sustainability demonstrating how individuals and small organisations can play their part in the battle against climate change. An initial example is that we will commit to ACEVO's Sustainability Leadership Principles, as well as developing a Sustainability Strategy to see what difference we can make.



If I need them they are always ready to help me.

Resident



REACHING POTENTIAL GOAL – WE WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITY

Over the next five years we will:

Recruit more people into our expanded charity, creating jobs that contribute to our wider community

Providing decent, well-paid jobs is one of the most important ways in which people can be brought out of poverty and remain so. We are a London Living Wage employer, offer an excellent benefits package, invest in training and genuinely value our staff. If our feasibility studies for further business prove to be the right choice for both the charity and the community, there will be further jobs in which we will aim to employ staff who are job ready but would benefit from an excellent employer.

Our Annual Staff Survey results have improved year-on-year since 2020 and we are proud of this trend. To further empower us to be an excellent employer we will identify the most suitable accreditation for our charity and seek to achieve it, so that we can be sure that we



I love being part of a team dedicated to enriching older people's lives, fostering a vibrant community, and providing high-quality homes where they can thrive.

Caroline Getty, Property & Estates Manager)

are doing the best for employees who may need a little more support in the workplace to fulfil their potential.

Embrace the digital age

Whilst we made a significant inroad with the installation of our digital care monitoring system, this is an area where we are yet to capitalise on the technological advancements that would improve both CA as an organisation and the lives of individuals that we support, without losing a fundamental and nurturing human connection. To assist us on this journey we will be developing and implementing a Digital Strategy.

TIMESCALES AND BUDGET

This is a five-year strategy and is ambitious. We are moving out of our comfort zone into areas we have not been involved in before and where we know there are challenges, particularly adult social care.

All of the developments that we aspire to undertake will be subject to feasibility studies and pilots, and only proceed if there are evidenced-based business cases which indicate that we will be able to improve outcomes for people i.e. enable them to live with more dignity and independence, and are financially sustainable.

Having reviewed our Reserves Policy as part of the strategy development process, we have been able to set aside a substantial Strategy Delivery Fund to deliver the various initiatives indicated in our strategy. We will use this ring-fenced fund to invest in the future of Croydon residents whilst ensuring we safeguard the charity for the future.





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Registered Charity Numbers: 204963 - Croydon Almshouse Charities - 810114 - Croydon Relief in Need Charities