

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 1199341

Position Statement: Entry Criteria for Admission to the Bethesda Homes

The suggestion has been made to the trustees that if they were to widen the entry criteria into the Bethesda Homes this would help alleviate the issues associated with occupancy levels.

In considering any question and/or suggestion that may arise as to the operational direction of a charity, the starting point has to be: "what does your trust deed or constitution or Memorandum & Articles of Association state regarding the purpose of your charity and what are the trustees permitted to do?" If it is permitted the trustees can consider the matter, if not they would be acting beyond their remit and powers which in turn exposes them to possible sanction by the Charity Commission. For a Christian charity, the trustees are also aware of their accountability in stewarding the resources, ultimately provided by the Lord, to achieve the charity's stated purpose.

In November 2019, as part of the consultation information pack to support the presentations made on the Future of Bethesda, the trustees published a document "Why does Bethesda not open up and/or change its entry criteria to allow other Christians to come into its homes?" Before publishing this the trustees prayerfully considered its content and the need to be faithful to the Charity's purpose. Central to the document was the trustees' concern regarding maintaining the ethos (i.e. the distinct characteristics) of the Bethesda Homes.

The document also explained that the trustees did make provision for those who through circumstances may not have been able to attend a GS chapel yet were able to confirm their agreement to the GS Articles of Faith. It was also noted that the situation is dealt with confidentially on a case-by-case basis.

In the GSBF Newsletter (April 2023) the trustees clarified further the position regarding anyone who did not meet the specific entry requirements by explaining: "The Charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association (Trust Deed), provide that primarily the Gospel Standard Bethesda Homes and/or Flatlets are for the benefit of those who are either:

1. A member of a Gospel Standard Church or
2. A regular attender of a Gospel Standard listed chapel.

However, the Trust Deed also makes provision to allow others to be considered for Bethesda. This additional provision is not so well known, and as such, whilst we are not seeking to change the provision, we would like to make potential applicants more aware of it".

It was also stated that: "Those who may not immediately feel that they satisfy (1) or (2) above, are still welcome to apply for entry. All applications involve the completion of an Application Form, which is then considered by the Trustees, with all applications being treated sympathetically and in strictest confidence.

In the case of applications outside (1) & (2) above the applicant will also be asked to explain why or how they consider Bethesda would be suitable for them. The Trustees will be looking to ensure that the way of life in a Bethesda Home, reflects the applicant's current lifestyle and way of living in their own home, to ensure that they would be comfortable within the Bethesda environment. The application may involve a meeting with two of the Bethesda Trustees, so that they can explain more about Bethesda's ethos and give both the Committee and the Applicant an opportunity to clarify any points arising. We hope by this

process to help ensure that right decisions are made for the applicant's wellbeing".

It must also be added that the Trustees, have over the years, welcomed a number of applicants who do not qualify under (1) & (2) above, and the individuals concerned have found Bethesda to be a "a House of Mercy" and a dwelling place with those of like mind and continue so to do.

The newsletter article also provided a description of what it is to live in a Bethesda Home. This was provided to help potential applicants understand the ethos of Bethesda to help them decide whether Bethesda was an environment where they would feel of like mind with the residents.

In addition to the information above, the Trustees have prepared a supplementary document that explains '[What it is to live in a Bethesda Home](#)'. This gives details of what a perspective resident would expect to find in the daily life of Bethesda and the conduct of the Homes. The document has not been written in a prescriptive way, its purposes is to highlight what it is to live in a Christian care home where the residents desire to walk in the fear of the Lord and according to the precepts of the Bible.

The document published in 2019 concluded as follows:

"It is sometimes commented that Bethesda is not a church - which is true, however, Bethesda is the Lord's provision for those in GS chapels (the defined beneficiaries) and it would seem appropriate that the entry criteria to Bethesda reflects this."

"The position may be summed up by quoting from the first edition of the Bethesda brochure, which was issued in 1951. Mr S F Paul, at that time Secretary of the Fund, stated in his preface:

"... that the Committee of the Gospel Standard Societies conceived the idea of establishing homes for the aged and infirm friends connected with our Gospel Standard causes of truth, so that they might be favoured in their declining days or times of affliction, to dwell with those who are like-minded with themselves, and to be cared for in a spiritual as well as a home-like atmosphere.

This is what is committed into the custody of the trustees to uphold and it is our continuing desire to be good and faithful stewards in fulfilling our duty to Bethesda".

With the Lord's help, the trustees humbly seek to continue faithfully serving the GS group of churches for which the Charity was established.

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