

MCF Member Briefing

October 2020

Whilst it is a pleasure to introduce my first Member briefing as Chief Executive, I never could have envisaged I would be starting my new role in such strange and frustrating circumstances. That said, the way the entire organisation's response to the impact of COVID-19 has been inspirational, and I must place on record my thanks to everyone who has gone the extra mile to ensure that the MCF can continue to do what it does best and that the needs of our beneficiaries have remained at the forefront of our actions.

Freemasons' Hall was closed following the initial suspension of masonic activities, however a small team was permitted weekly visits to deal with post, banking etc. Most of the staff switched to remote working and effective operations were maintained. On 14 September we commenced a transitional phase with some staff returning to London but with numbers capped to enable us to maintain effective social distancing. Subject to any further tightening of restrictions, we will continue to maintain a skeleton staff presence in London for the foreseeable future.

The suspension of masonic activities has had an impact upon aspects of our work and we have made best use of technology to maintain support for our Provincial Grand Almoners, Charity Stewards and fundraisers. Next month, we plan to hold our Festival Forum by Zoom, however this is a fluid situation and we will continue to review our processes and working practices in order to deliver the best possible service we can.

We are currently preparing the groundwork that will feed into our next five-year strategy, but it is already clear that alignment with and support for UGLE will be a key theme and, with this in mind, it was important that over the last seven months the MCF has been able to work closely with UGLE on a joint COVID-19 response. The first phase was funded with a £1m grant from the MCF and has supported some very worthy projects and generated some significant positive publicity. PPE, meals for the vulnerable and communication devices, such as tablets for those in hospitals or care homes, have been popular choices.

The second phase builds on the joint Relief Chest appeal which ran throughout the summer and easily reached its target of £1m which was matched by the MCF. This fund will now be used to further the masonic response to COVID-19 and will be distributed to the most worthy projects under three distinct themes, the first being

homelessness and rough sleeping. The first window for applications opened on 1 October, and we have already received applications for much-needed initiatives and projects.

In reading this briefing, you will see that the MCF and RMBI Care Co. are very much open for business. We all look forward to a return to some form of normality, but in the meantime, I thank the MCF Members for the support they have given to the executive and staff during this challenging time.

As usual we plan to hold our AGM and Members' Meeting in December, although this year it will be necessary to alter the format and further details will follow in due course.



Les Hutchinson

Charity Grants

A meeting of the Charity Grants Committee was held 'virtually' on Wednesday, 14 October 2020. Once again, the Provincial feedback system appears to be working well as we had a 100 per cent response providing positive feedback on the recommended grants across 14 Provinces.

The Committee approved 15 large grants totalling **£794,708** which included:

- **Daisy Chain – £57,099 over two years.** The grant will support young people aged 15-25 with autism who are also experiencing poor mental health. The charity works with young people to build confidence, help them to recognise and develop resilience, promote safer decision making and ultimately help the young person to thrive. The project will work with young people on a one-to-one basis, offering support to those who are particularly at risk of exclusion or exploitation. The support is tailored to the individual young person and

includes a plan of what they would like to achieve, along with strategies to help them cope with their emotions.

- **The Limehouse Project – £56,567 over three years.** The charity supports women, older people, people of ethnic minority origin, and those for whom English is not their first language. The Limehouse Project's services include skills development, employment training, legal advice on social welfare issues, IT training, and health and wellbeing services. This grant will fund Living Well Clubs which offer digital workshops to teach older people how to use a computer and the internet so they can look up information and stay in touch with people. They will also offer advice sessions about living well and activities such as gentle exercise or arts based activities.
- **Care for the Carers – £62,315 over three years.** The charity offers a range of services, advice and information, including practical and emotional support, groups, activities and events. It aims to empower carers to be involved in decisions and making choices that affect their lives, ensuring that they are recognised and valued. This grant will support 11-18 year olds in a caring role and help them to feel less alone, to have a break, access support, make friends and feel better about themselves and their caring role. A Young Carers Manager will run a monthly group, provide dedicated specialist support by phone, online or in person and they will create a safe online space where young carers can get help and support from peers.

The Committee also noted 21 approved small grants totalling **£274,630** including:

- **Baby Bank Network – £5,900 over two years.** The Baby Bank Network is a small local charity working in Bristol to relieve child poverty, by providing donated baby and children's items to families in need. These can include clothes, buggies, cots, safety equipment, toiletries, toys, nappies and other essential items.
- **The Prader-Willi Syndrome Association UK – £15,000 over three years.** This is a national charity that supports those affected by Prader-Willi Syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects individuals from birth causing low muscle tone, motor development delays, mild to moderate learning difficulties, incomplete sexual development, and constant hunger. There are around 2,000 children living with the disorder. The charity provides a helpline with advice

and information, family support, health, education, and eating plans.

- **West Norfolk Befriending – £7,600 over two years.** This is a small local charity working to ease isolation among older people in West Norfolk. The charity provides befriending visits to people who are unable to leave their homes, using trained volunteers. In addition, the charity provides befriending and a number of community social events such as lunches and coffee mornings to bring people together. Due to COVID-19, the charity now offers a telephone befriending service which has a waiting list.

The Matched Funding and Festival Grants programmes continue to be popular. Thus far:

- **Matched Funding:** 61 approved grants across 25 Provinces, a total of **£136,839** has been awarded thus far.
- **Festival Grants:** 30 approved grants across eight Provinces, a total of **£68,000** has been awarded thus far.

Hospice grant programme

The Committee also noted 203 approved grants to hospices totalling **£300,000**. These grants are towards running costs and are available to local hospices that receive 60 per cent or less of their funding from NHS.

In addition, the next Hospice UK programme will be opening shortly. This year's theme is looking at improving equality and diversity within the hospice sector.

MCF response to COVID-19

The MCF continues to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis by developing new grant programmes and making additional funds available to support those most in need.

UGLE initiative – £1m allocated to Regional Communications Groups

It is now nearing the end of the funding, with 181 approved grants totalling **£970,501** to the 10 Regional Communications Groups. Grants have covered

a large range of support within the community, from the provision of PPE in various local healthcare settings in the community to women's refuges.

MCF initiative – £500,000 allocated to all Provinces and Metropolitan Grand Lodge

This fund is Proving to be very popular with the Provinces and we have now engaged with 42 Provinces. In total, 232 grants have been approved totalling **£347,770**.

Freemasons' COVID-19 Community Fund – £2.1m allocated to Regional Communications Groups

This fund has been developed to contribute to the national rehabilitation phase of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing charitable support to those disadvantaged as a result of COVID-19. The programme is in three rounds with a different theme for each one. The first round is now open for applications relating to homelessness and rough sleeping. Funding has been provided by a dedicated Relief Chest which has been matched up to £1 million by the MCF.

Digital and Technology

Despite the recent challenging times and increased workload, the team has continued to provide uninterrupted support to their colleagues in various MCF functions and external key stakeholders.

We are pleased to report that all major corporate plan-related activities for the six months leading up to September 2020 were successfully achieved.

Key accomplishments and work in progress:

- As part of developing an MCF '**Governance model**', an audit and risk assessment on MCF Digital and IT assets was carried out by an external service provider/consultant (Prism Infosec). They compared the current infrastructure against the National Cyber Security Centre security baseline and a set of realistic attack scenarios that MCF could face. The scenarios identified the need for five separate work streams to harden security defences. Additionally, the maturity assessment identified a further 24 opportunities for

improvement. Each recommendation has been allocated a timescale for implementation; these range from 'immediate' to 'within 12 months'.

- Migration of **online fundraising** platform from everydayhero to JustGiving: This forced change is our top priority, as we work diligently to ensure seamless transition by 30 November 2020.
- **IMPACT** (reporting application for festivals) review: We conducted a survey over the summer period, which produced a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative feedback from external users. Responses were of a high standard with nearly all festivals returning feedback in a timely manner and with great enthusiasm for the system as a whole. The feedback received is under review and we are working on design, development and deployment of additional features to be released in December 2020.
- **Digital alms** pilot programme: Launched in September 2020, we are expecting the programme to run until the end of November 2020. Upon satisfactory feedback and successful tests against set benchmarks, the programme will be rolled out to all clients of the Relief Chest Scheme.
- **Migration of the Relief Chest Scheme** database/system – **RC2** from ADF to APEX – was successfully achieved.
- **Universal Database (UDB)** 'Phase 2' development and release: completed.

HR

Staffing

We continue to use our virtual platforms to support recruitment and induction of new starters. Following the appointment of John McCrohan as Operations Director, two new head of function roles have been created which will report to John. These are: Head of Fundraising; and Head of Audit, Impact and Risk.

We have continued to use the government's Furlough Scheme for those roles where work activity has diminished.

A small cohort of staff have also returned to work at Freemasons' Hall on an occasional basis, and within strict rota control, following comprehensive risk assessments and new ways of working to ensure all can work safely and feel

supported.

Employee Engagement

Regular virtual events have continued over the summer months together with wellbeing updates and in particular support for mental wellbeing.

We received excellent results from our recent Employee Engagement Survey with all categories showing improvement from the 2019 results. These will be shared in detail with staff and for heads of function to lead on departmental action plans.

Learning and Development

The MCF participated in its second Learning at Work Week during the week of 5 October. It is a national initiative from the Campaign for Learning and designed to build learning cultures within the workplace.

The theme this year was 'Learning Journeys' and we focused on new challenges and bright ideas with the opportunity to share information via virtual sessions and also provide resources to staff to help them to think about their own lifelong learning and how to deal positively with challenges through learning and innovation – all very relevant due to the current COVID-19 situation.

We have also worked in partnership with our external training facilitator to reshape the Leadership and Management Development programmes to enable them to be delivered virtually.

Fundraising

Festival Drop in Sessions

Virtual festival drop-in sessions continue to take place, with the most recent being attended by 17 of the 22 Provinces currently in festival. The monthly sessions are open to all festival committee members, and are an opportunity for fundraisers to ask questions and exchange ideas, all supported by the fundraising team.

Keeping the fundraising going

Fundraising continues among the Provinces despite the restrictions in place due to COVID-19 with ideas and initiatives being created to continue fundraising within the membership.

One example is West Kent, who have launched a fundraiser that will lead them up to Christmas which is a virtual balloon race, which is a 100 per cent eco-friendly event where everything is real except the balloon.

This is a new innovative fundraising solution in the face of coronavirus restrictions and event cancellations that isn't just simply donating. It is a fun seven-day computer game where you can change your balloon parameters to help win and follow your own decorated balloon on Google Maps and satellites 24/7. It's a great initiative and one that is sure to be a success.

Other new initiatives that expand our use of technology to make donations are coming online and we will be promoting these around the Provinces to enhance our fundraising endeavours.

Festival launches

All four 2025 festivals have successfully launched with two of the 2026 festivals also launched, those being West Kent and West Wales. The 2026 Bedfordshire Festival has a planned launch for late spring 2021. The 2026 East Lancashire Festival Appeal has a planned launch for autumn 2021. Both have yet to set a firm date.

2020 festival finales

- Somerset (FGC) – The original date in June 2020 has been postponed to a date to be confirmed, possibly for March or April 2021. The Province and the charity will announce the results of the appeal in December via video stream.
- Northumberland (RMBI Care Co.) – Moved from the 3 October 2020 to the 2 October 2021. The venue remains the Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park, Newcastle. The Festival Appeal will be extended to allowing fundraising to continue in support of the RMBI Care Co.

- Herefordshire (MSF) – The original date in September has been postponed and date is to be confirmed for March or April 2021 at the same venue, being the Three Counties Hotel, Hereford.

Legacies

Legacy income reported as of the end of period June 2020/21 stood at £1.3 million.

There have been two significant distributions received recently:

- A £100,000 distribution was received from the estate of the late Bro Philip Chorley. To date, the RMBI Legacy Fund has received £374,918 from Bro Chorley's estate. The estate administration continues. Mr Chorley was a Devonshire Freemason.
- A £95,000 distribution was received recently from the estate of the late Bro Percy Seward for the Masonic Charitable Foundation. This estate is also not yet finalised and a small further distribution is likely. Bro Seward was an East Lancashire Freemason.

The MCF's charitable membership with The Goodwill Partnership has been running since 25 April 2018 and as a free will-writing service from 4 February 2020. As of the end of August 2020 the MCF has referred 472 individuals and created through the service 372 individual wills (of which 83 per cent have a known masonic connection and 17 per cent have no known masonic connection).

We have been made aware of 75 pledged gifts to the MCF in those wills with an estimated combined value of £637,983 and have further been made aware of the fact that there are an unknown number of undisclosed residual pledges to the MCF. The cost to the charity of the wills completed stands at £43,747 meaning that for every £1 spent by the charity to date, £15 has been promised back to the MCF (based on the pledges we know about, in fact the return is likely to be higher).

Masonic Support

Medical applications – Applications for medical support continue to be suspended. At their November meeting, the Masonic Support Committee will consider proposals to recommence support with effect from January 2021. This will likely be subject to amended criteria which reflect current waiting times and the variation of provision from region to region.

Mobility aids – We are once again accepting applications for mobility aid provision, following appropriate written guarantees from our provider that they are operating in a COVID-19 secure manner.

Advice & Support Team (AST) – The demand for support from the AST remains high as they continue to lead on the completion of new applications. The team are once again carrying out face-to-face visits in very limited circumstances and only where remote support is not appropriate or viable. Prior to any visits, an individual risk assessment is carried out and approved. The team's operational risk assessment is reviewed on a weekly basis, reflecting the continually evolving situation.

Visiting Volunteers – The volunteers have recommenced supporting the completion of applications, working via telephone only. Around 1/3 of the 400 volunteers have completed an e-learning unit which was specifically developed to update them on changes to the MCF application process as a result of coronavirus. All volunteers also have access to a new online resource hub.

PGAs – We are hosting monthly virtual regional sessions for all PGAs. These have replaced our usual twice-yearly face-to-face meetings. The October meeting will be an opportunity for Les Hutchinson and John McCrohan to meet with this key stakeholder group. The residential PGA conference which was scheduled for October has been postponed to May 2021. The viability of the event is currently being reviewed with input from the PGA Advisory Group.

Staff – Active recruitment is under way for a number of roles within the department. Basic DBS checks are being carried out for all Grants and Enquiries Officers, in line with the revised Safeguarding Policies approved by the Board in December 2019.

Teddies for Loving Care (TLC) – The publicity planned to mark three million bears has been postponed until Spring 2021. The planned activities were unable to go ahead due to coronavirus-related restrictions and this would have significantly compromised the potential for securing coverage. The rescheduled push in relation

to three million bears will be tied in with the 20th anniversary of the launch of the initiative in Essex. Updated marketing collateral has been delivered to Provinces to support fundraising efforts and the local representatives continue to arrange for the delivery of bears to local hospitals where the hospital is still happy to receive them. We are speaking with a number of experts about the option of individually bagging bears to ascertain if the increase in production costs and waste by-product would be offset by a measureable improvement in infection risk control. At the current time, individually bagged bears are not a requirement for the majority of hospitals.

Return to London – A small number of staff are working from the London office on a part-time basis, where this is essential for their role.

Finance

- The MCF group accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 were approved by the Trustee Board in September with unqualified audit reports.
- An excellent management letter was received from the auditors, stating that all systems and processes operating robustly.
- The MCF CAIF fully recovered to its highest ever level in October.
- A long-term strategic financial plan is being revised for submission to the trustee board in December.
- The budgeting cycle for 2021/22 has commenced.
- Enhanced cash flow forecasting is working effectively and targets for the current year expected to be met.

Communications

The Communications team is continuing to promote the phase one COVID-19 grants awarded by the MCF in partnership with the Regional Communications Groups (RCG) and UGLE. We are currently achieving one news article every day in local newspapers in addition to a number of radio broadcasts. We are preparing to work alongside UGLE to publicise the next phase of the grants.

Our promotion of the largest grants - to Mind, Buttle and Age UK have all been recognised prominently on the websites of these charities and we have been working closely with their communications teams to promote the grants and look for opportunities to highlight the impact of the work being funded over the months ahead.

Our new website has now been live for around three months. Feedback is largely positive and we have received a number of suggestions on how we can improve the website further over the months and years ahead. If you have not yet had a chance to look at the new website please do take a few minutes to do so by going to mcf.org.uk.

The MCF supported UGLE's Open House weekend in September and, despite lockdown restrictions being in place in London, Freemasons' Hall welcomed and nearly 2,000 visitors through its doors. The MCF and Teddies for Loving Care had a stall in the vestibule area to highlight our work to those present.

The latest edition of *Better Lives* was published in October and focused on promoting the range of care that the MCF and RMBI Care Co. can provide. Hard copies were posted to all those on our mailing list as well as via email.

The team is currently in the process of drafting the next MCF Impact Report which will cover the financial year 2019-2020. This year, the full report will be available in digital format only, however, we will write to our key stakeholders within Freemasonry and in the charity sector with a summary of the report and information about how to access the full online version.

The marketing team has been producing some excellent content on social media,

especially in line with a number of national and international 'awareness' days, including joint working with Mind on World Mental Health day. Our social media audience and engagement continues to grow – we are deploying new measurement tools to assess its impact, and ensure that we can maximise its potential to reach more people and tell them about the work that the MCF does on behalf of Freemasonry to support the wider community.

We are continuing to contribute to the UGLE's First Rising newsletter and promoting our work via our own e-news platform, which has become an increasingly important tool during this lockdown period.

The Communications team is continuing to explore ways in which we can maximise the use and effectiveness of our online communications channels such as email, social media, video and our website to help the MCF communicate and work more effectively through this period of remote working and the shutdown of Freemasonry across England and Wales.

Strategy and Impact

Grants policy – We are continuing to adapt policy in the Masonic Support department that is light touch and responsive to the evolving needs of families and individuals affected by COVID-19. Changes have been made to Daily Living Costs grants, medical care, mobility aids and support for children in education. The uncertain end-point for the effects of COVID-19 require us to remain flexible and responsive as new needs emerge and government support is announced. Medical grants are currently on hold but under active review with the Masonic Support Committee.

Monitoring & Evaluation – Petra Mittuchova remains on maternity leave with a view to returning in the new year. The 2020 beneficiary survey produced a third consecutive year of positive feedback which has been shared with all staff. Charities continue to give positive anonymous feedback in relation to our online application and shortlisting process.

Changes to the department – Following John McCrohan's promotion to Operations Director we are reviewing how the team operates in the future.

Admin and Support

The Admin and Support team has continued to work well both remotely and in the office. The MCF reception is now open Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm.

The team has been busy supporting the Return to London Project Group, purchasing supplies and equipment in order to facilitate a COVID-safe environment.

The team continue to support MCF staff working at home by providing small items of equipment and stationery to help them work effectively. It was anticipated that additional equipment would be required as a result of staff undertaking their Display Screen Equipment Home Workstation Self-Assessment.

Linda Walker has also been working closely with Les Hutchinson on the handover process for the Chief Executive role.

RMBI Care Co.

Following the respite of the summer, the care homes are again a focus of protection as the pandemic returns. Secure PPE supplies are in situ, with weekly testing of all residents and staff, and strong infection-control protocols in place. The introduction of specialised visitation rooms has been particularly pleasing to see, creating a separate entrance for families and access to a screened room to meet their loved ones.

Public Health Guidance and enforcement is more stringent this time around with one positive test by resident or family member constituting an automatic 28-day lock down and embargo. At present, three homes are in this position: Albert Edward and Queen Elizabeth Court in Wales and Devonshire Court in Leicester – all localities faced with community lockdowns.

The RMBI Care Co. has maximised claiming the Government Infection Control Funds within the State Aid rules which has contributed to a strong set of half-year financial results against the recast budget. Since the crisis started in the spring, 55 residents have died of a COVID-related death and 82 have fully recovered. Around

160 staff have tested positive in this time with the few who have been hospitalised making a full recovery.

Please take the opportunity to visit our new website at RMBI.org.uk which updates on all our innovative safety measures and also features the latest photographs of our new Care Home build at Lord Harris Court Reading which remains on schedule to open in 2021.

In remembrance of those we have lost, Rev. Simon Thorn Grand Chaplain for UGLE will hold a prerecorded service in early November which will be available for families, residents and staff.

Relief Chest

Income For the six months ended 30 September 2020



September 2019

 **£4.334M**

£6.660M

Unit Donations	£0.886M	£2.417M
Regular Donations	£1.447M	£1.691M
Gift Aid Envelopes	£0.207M	£1.262M
Gift Aid Tax Relief	£0.545M	£0.638M
Other	£0.642M	£0.652M

Total funds available £21.84M

£23.56M

Volume-Metrics 2020

2019

Avg no of monthly personal donations into the Scheme	32,241	54,027
Donations eligible for gift aid tax reclaims as a %	92.42%	91.71%
Average number of monthly payments from the Scheme	408	481
Number of Relief Chests	5,029	4,948
Number of Relief Chests opened during the period	26	91
Number of Relief Chests closed during the period	27	60

Donations/payments For the six months ended 30 September 2020



September 2019

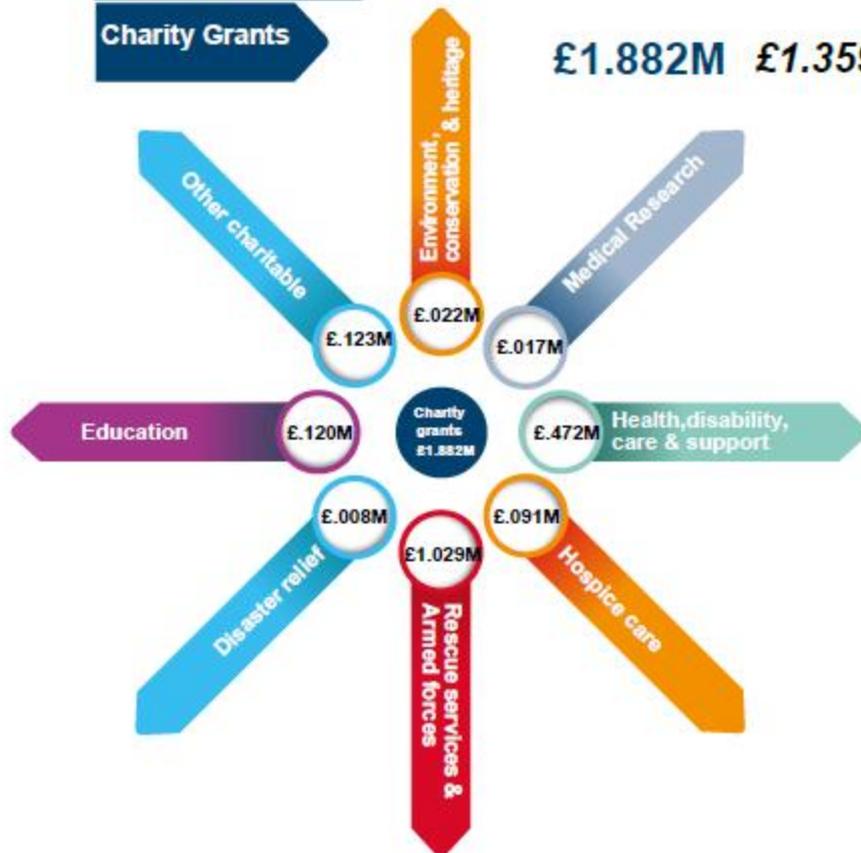
£5.387M

£5.927M

Masonic Charitable Foundation £2.892M £2.712M

Legacy Charities £0.613M £1.856M

Charity Grants £1.882M £1.359M



MASONIC COVID19 APPEAL as at 30 September 2020



 **Total Received £1.028M**

Unit Donations	£.318M
Relief Chest Transfers	£.471M
Personal Donations	£.200M
Gift Aid Tax Relief	£.039M



Masonic Charitable Foundation
60 Great Queen Street
London
WC2B 5AZ

Email: info@mcf.org.uk
Telephone: 020 3146 3333
Website: mcf.org.uk
Charity No. 1164703 Company No. 09751836

[Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)