



Relief Chest Scheme

Masonic Charitable Foundation
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Relief Chest Scheme

Operating Manual and Rules

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Relief Chest Scheme

Designated Fund Account Rules

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Designated Fund Account Rules

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Grand Charity established the Relief Chest Scheme in 1986, initially to help Lodges make charitable donations efficiently. The Scheme was later extended to assist other masonic organisations operating within England and Wales (i.e. those in which the United Grand Lodge of England considers it acceptable for its members to participate). Under the Scheme, a Lodge or other masonic organisation (the "Relief Chest holder") opens a Relief Chest, in which the funds held may **only** be used for charitable purposes.
- 1.2. Funds intended for charitable distribution are paid into a Relief Chest and The Grand Charity reclaims eligible tax relief, which is also paid into that Relief Chest. The Grand Charity endeavours to invest funds held in all Relief Chests at a competitive rate of interest, tax free, and all interest earned is credited to the Relief Chests in proportion to the balances held. At the request of a Relief Chest holder, The Grand Charity will make charitable donations to charities registered on the Register of Charities maintained by the Charity Commission, to charities recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as a charity for tax purposes, to organisations outside England and Wales for charitable purposes, to any other Relief Chest (except other Relief Chests held by the same Chest holder) or for the relief of individuals in distress.
- 1.3. All Relief Chests funds are the assets of The Grand Charity and are reported as restricted funds in the Annual Report and Accounts. Donations from a Relief Chest will be in accordance with the wishes of the Relief Chest holder subject to the rules of the Scheme.

- 1.4 A Relief Chest may only be used for charitable purposes. **It may not be used to accumulate or hoard funds for deposit or for investment purposes. For this reason donations must be made regularly to charitable causes. Donations cannot be made from a Relief Chest to that Relief Chest holder's own general fund, Almoner's fund, benevolent fund or association, or to any similar fund, even if that fund is a charity.** Furthermore, Relief Chest funds may not be used to cover the annual contributions payable under Rule 271 of the Book of Constitutions.
- 1.5. A Relief Chest Representative acts as the agent of individual donors and of his Lodge (or other masonic unit) and not as an agent of The Grand Charity.

2. Opening or Closing a Relief Chest

- 2.1. A Relief Chest can be opened for any Lodge, Chapter or other masonic organisation operating within England and Wales, and which the United Grand Lodge of England accepts that its members may join (e.g. Mark Lodges, Provincial Grand Lodges, Royal Arch Chapters, Rose Croix Chapters, etc.).
- 2.2. Relief Chests for Private Lodges
- 2.2.1. To open a Relief Chest a Lodge must pass a resolution in open Lodge. Subject to the by-laws and practice of each Lodge, prior notice of motion is not required. The Lodge is the "Relief Chest holder".
- 2.2.2. The application form for opening a Relief Chest must be signed by the Secretary of the Lodge and is available online at **mcf.org/reliefchest** or by contacting the Relief Chest office (Tel: 020 7395 9246). Applications can be submitted at any time and the Chest will become active immediately once the application is received and processed.

2.3. Relief Chests for Provincial Grand Lodges and other masonic organisations

2.3.1. A Provincial Grand Lodge may open a Relief Chest by completing the application form available online at **mcf.org/reliefchest** or by contacting the Relief Chest office. The application form must be signed by the Provincial Grand Secretary.

2.3.2. All other masonic organisations as referred to in 2.1. above may open a Relief Chest by completing the relevant application form available online at **mcf.org/reliefchest** or from the Relief Chest office. The application form must be signed by the secretary, trustee or other authorised signatory. Applications can be submitted at any time and the Relief Chest will become active immediately once the application is received and processed.

2.4. Every Relief Chest holder must appoint a designated representative (the “Relief Chest Representative”) who shall be the point of contact with the Relief Chest office and who shall be responsible for requesting donations to be made from the Relief Chest. In the case of a Lodge, the person appointed may, but need not necessarily, be the Charity Steward and may hold the office for as long as the Lodge wishes without the need for re-appointment. A Relief Chest holder may remove its Relief Chest Representative at any time and appoint a new one in his place, but until such new Relief Chest Representative is notified to the Relief Chest office [using the Change of Representative Form available online at **mcf.org/reliefchest** or from the Relief Chest office] the office shall not be obliged to communicate with him and may continue to communicate with the existing Relief Chest Representative. The Relief Chest Representative is the **only** person with whom the Relief Chest office will be in communication unless he is unobtainable, in which case the office may communicate with the Lodge Secretary (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge).

2.5. Closing a Relief Chest

If a Relief Chest holder wishes to **close** a Relief Chest, all the remaining funds held must be distributed according to the guidelines in Section 5 and a letter must be sent to the Relief Chest office enclosing the donation voucher(s). Please ensure that the covering letter states that the Relief Chest is to be closed, that all existing Direct Debits should be cancelled and that the remaining balance in the Relief Chest is to be distributed to charities as indicated on the voucher(s). Please note that a Relief Chest cannot be closed immediately as final tax and interest figures will need to be added first.

3. **Payments into Relief Chests**

3.1. Payments **into** a Relief Chest arise from three sources:

- Donations — individual or collective;
- Gift Aid tax relief — from donations made by qualifying UK tax payers who have made a valid Gift Aid declaration;
- Interest — earned on the qualifying balance held in the Relief Chest.

3.2. Donations

3.2.1. Individual donations

Any individual can make a donation into a Relief Chest by completing the donation form that is available to download from mcf.org/reliefchest or by contacting the Relief Chest office (Tel: 020 7395 9246). The form may be used for either regular donations or for one-off (single) donations. Gift Aid Envelopes are also available from the Relief Chest office and can also be used for one-off (single) donations. Donors do not have to be Freemasons.

3.2.1.1. Regular Donations

Regular Donations into a Relief Chest are paid by direct debit from the donor's bank or building society account. The completed form should be sent to the Relief Chest office.

3.2.1.2. Single Donations

To make a single donation, a cheque or crossed postal order should be made payable to The Freemasons' Grand Charity and sent with the donation form to the Relief Chest office (or for payment by other means please contact the Relief Chest office for further details). Cash donations should be avoided where possible, because of the greater security risks.

3.2.1.3. Gift Aid

Individual donors who pay sufficient UK tax can increase the value of their donation to a Relief Chest by making a Gift Aid declaration. This can apply to a specific donation or to all donations they make into any Relief Chest under the Scheme. Once the individual has made a valid Gift Aid declaration (which is included on the donation form and Gift Aid Envelope), The Grand Charity will reclaim any eligible tax relief associated with the donation and credit that amount to the appropriate Relief Chest. In addition, donors who pay tax at the higher rate can reclaim the difference between the higher rate of tax and the basic rate of tax on the gross value of their donation through their self-assessment tax return. Further information on Gift Aid tax relief can be found on the following website.

gov.uk/hmrc

3.2.1.4. Legacies

Legacies may be made for the benefit of a Relief Chest. Guidance on appropriate wording is available from the Relief Chest office.

Sometimes an individual Lodge (or other) may receive a legacy under a Will. There may be circumstances where the Lodge decides that it is desirable to re-direct that legacy to a Relief Chest in order to save inheritance tax. This is normally achieved by entering into a Deed of Variation within two years of the testator's death (and this is likely to require the participation of the executors). If a Lodge proposes to re-direct a legacy to a Relief Chest by Deed of Variation, the Lodge should notify The Grand Charity before the Deed of Variation is signed as there may be circumstances where The Grand Charity needs to be involved in the process.

The Grand Charity may incur legal fees in dealing with a legacy made for the benefit of a Relief Chest. The Grand Charity reserves the right to deduct any such legal fees from the Relief Chest concerned, at its discretion.

3.2.2. Collective donations

3.2.2.1. A Relief Chest holder can make a donation into its Relief Chest from its funds (e.g. a Lodge's general fund) or from funds it has collected from individuals. For collections, the Relief Chest Representative should complete a Miscellaneous Form and send it with a cheque for the total amount to the Relief Chest office.

3.2.2.2. For collective donations, Gift Aid tax relief can only be reclaimed for individuals donating to the total following submission of each individual donor's name, address and the amount of the donation, all of which must be listed separately. Each individual must have made a valid Gift Aid declaration for the contribution to be eligible for Gift Aid tax relief. If they have not, then a Gift Aid declaration must also be included. The most effective way of achieving this is to use the Gift Aid Envelope scheme, which The Grand Charity operates for Relief Chests. A Verification Schedule (which is available online at **mcf.org/reliefchest**) must be completed by the Relief Chest Representative and sent in with the envelope slips and a covering cheque made payable to The Freemasons' Grand Charity. Envelopes are available from the Relief Chest office. For other means of payment, please contact the Relief Chest office. Cash donations should be avoided where possible because of the greater security risks.

3.2.3. Gift Aid

The Grand Charity will reclaim any eligible tax relief arising from donations made by qualifying UK taxpayers who have made a valid Gift Aid declaration covering their donation. All tax repayments will be credited to the relevant Relief Chest. For further information on Gift Aid tax relief, please refer to the following website. **gov.uk/hmrc**

3.2.4. Interest

All interest is earned gross of tax and is credited to individual Relief Chests monthly in proportion to the balances held. The amount of interest allocated to each Relief Chest in any month is based on the balance that has been kept in the Relief Chest during the whole of the previous calendar month. The interest “compounds” monthly.

4. **Gift Aid Tax Relief**

- 4.1. Charities, such as The Grand Charity, can reclaim tax from HM Revenue & Customs on donations received from individuals who pay sufficient UK tax on any amount they donate to the charity. The donor must have paid at least as much UK tax as the charity is reclaiming on the donation. Basic rate tax relief is reclaimed by the charity on the donation, thereby enhancing the amount of money received by the charity. The donor must have made a Gift Aid declaration, which contains mandatory information including the name of the charity receiving the gift; in this case The Grand Charity. The recipient charity must hold all Gift Aid declaration forms for future HM Revenue & Customs audit inspections to confirm the validity of any tax reclaims that it has made.
- 4.2. The Grand Charity is the recipient charity of Gift Aid tax relief on Relief Chest donations and it is, therefore, identified as such on the Gift Aid declaration.
- 4.3. For Gift Aid tax relief to be claimed, donations must be made using the donation forms supplied by the Relief Chest office. No other forms will be accepted.

- 4.4. A donor who ceases to pay sufficient UK tax to cover the amount of tax that could be reclaimed by The Grand Charity on his donation, should **immediately** inform the Relief Chest office so that The Grand Charity's reclaim for tax can be stopped.
- 4.5. Relief Chest holders should seek to maximise the value of funds in their Relief Chests through the use of Gift Aid tax relief. Additional information on Gift Aid tax relief can be found by viewing the following website. **gov.uk/hmrc**

5. Payments from Relief Chests

5.1. Eligible payments

- 5.1.1. Donations from Relief Chests must be made for charitable purposes, which includes donations to charities registered on the Register of Charities maintained by Charity Commission or to charities recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as a charity for tax purposes or to organisations situated outside England and Wales for charitable purposes (subject to the qualifications noted in 5.2. below), or for the relief of individuals in distress or to any other Relief Chest (except other Relief Chests held by the same Chest holder). These include donations to masonic or non-masonic charities whose work is international, national or local. In relation to charities registered on the Register of Charities, the registered number should be provided. This can be obtained online from the Charity Commission's Register of Charities.

gov.uk/find-charity-information

Charities not registered on the Register of Charities should be asked to provide their charity tax reference number issued by HM Revenue & Customs. In relation to donations to organisations situated outside England and Wales that are not registered on the Register of Charities or recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as charities for tax purposes, please speak to the Relief Chest office for further information.

- 5.1.2. If you are unsure as to whether or not the cause/organisation you wish to make a donation to is classed as charitable, please call the Relief Chest office (Tel: 020 7395 9246) to confirm.
- 5.1.3. Relief Chest Representatives may be asked to provide evidence to confirm that an organisation is a charity if there is doubt as to its eligibility to receive a donation.

5.2. Ineligible payments

- 5.2.1. Donations cannot be made **under any circumstances** from a Relief Chest to that Relief Chest holder's own general fund, Almoner's fund, benevolent fund or association, or to any similar fund, **even if that fund is a charity**.
- 5.2.2. A Lodge or other masonic organisation is not permitted to use its Relief Chest as a free banking service simply to invest funds at advantageous rates and then repatriate the money into any of its own accounts.
- 5.2.3. Relief Chests must **not** be used to cover the annual contributions payable under Rule 271 of the Book of Constitutions or to pay similar contributions required under Provincial or Metropolitan Grand Lodge by-laws.
- 5.2.4. Christmas gifts to widows and payments for wreaths for funerals are not regarded as charitable and cannot be made from a Relief Chest.

5.3. Donations from a Relief Chest to a charity

- 5.3.1. To request that a donation be made from a Relief Chest to a charity, a resolution must be approved in open Lodge (or the equivalent if not a Lodge). Subject to the by-laws and practice of the Lodge (or equivalent), prior notice of motion is not essential. Following approval, the Relief Chest Representative must complete a voucher, which only he may obtain from the Relief Chest office. **All vouchers must be signed by the Relief Chest Representative and either the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward** (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge).
- 5.3.2. For donations to the general funds of any of the central Masonic Charities (The Grand Charity, The Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys, The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution, Masonic Samaritan Fund or Masonic Charitable Foundation) the Relief Chest Representative must use a **blue** voucher, which should be sent direct to the relevant charity with any related correspondence. These require only the insertion of a tick in a box to indicate which charity is to benefit from the donation.
- 5.3.3. For donations to charities not listed on the blue voucher, the Relief Chest Representative must use a **green** voucher, which should be forwarded to the Relief Chest office showing the name and address of the recipient charity.
- 5.3.4. For all except emergency donations - where payment to the charity is required urgently - cheques will be issued once a month. Requests received by the 15th of the month will usually be processed within the first five working days of the following month. The Grand Charity will send a cheque direct to the recipient charity, together with a letter identifying the source of the donation. The letter also requests that the recipient charity acknowledges the representative of the Relief Chest from which the donation was made.

- 5.3.5. There is no upper or lower limit on the amount that may be paid out of a Relief Chest, but a request for a donation will not be met if the amount exceeds the funds held in the Relief Chest.
- 5.3.6. If a Relief Chest holder requires a donation to be processed outside of the time frames listed in section 5.3.4 - or requires a cheque for presentation - a letter should accompany the voucher indicating the date that the cheque is required and to whom it should be sent.

5.4. Donations from a Relief Chest for an individual

- 5.4.1. Funds in a Relief Chest may be used to assist an individual in distress. There is no requirement that the individual receiving the assistance is a mason or a masonic dependant and there is no limit to the number of donations they may receive. Each donation may be of any amount, subject to the funds available in the Relief Chest.
- 5.4.2. In cases of extreme distress where money is required urgently, an **emergency donation** may be made from a Relief Chest. An emergency donation for the relief of distress of an individual does not require a resolution to be passed in open Lodge approving the payment, but it is limited to a maximum of £500. Authorisation for an emergency donation may be given by the Relief Chest Representative and either the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge).
- 5.4.3. Non-emergency donations for the relief of distress, where money is not required urgently, must be approved by a resolution passed in open Lodge. Subject to the by-laws and practice of the Lodge, prior notice of motion is not necessarily required. Donations approved in this way may be for any amount, subject to the funds available in the Relief Chest.

- 5.4.4. Vouchers must **not** be used to authorise donations for the relief of distress of individuals. Instead, a letter in the following format printed on the Relief Chest holder's headed paper, should be sent to the Relief Chest office providing details of the individual and the assurance of the Relief Chest holder that appropriate due diligence has been undertaken to confirm the need for relief:

We have made due enquiry and we are satisfied that:

A.N. Other
65 High Street
Anytown, Somewhere
WX 13YZ

is suffering from distress and is in need. The [*LODGE etc. NAME*] requests that the sum of [*IN WORDS*] pounds (£.....) be donated for the relief of [Bro/Mrs Xxx's] distress and be debited against Relief Chest No

[signed] A.B. Smith
(Relief Chest Representative)
[signed] E.F. Brown
(Master / Secretary / Treasurer / Almoner / Charity Steward)

The letter **must be signed** by the Relief Chest Representative **and** either the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge).

- 5.4.5. A request for a donation for the relief of distress is processed immediately by the Relief Chest office and a cheque, made payable to the Lodge (or other), is sent immediately. The Lodge (or other) is responsible for disbursing the money to the individual.
- 5.4.6. To enable The Grand Charity to satisfy HM Revenue & Customs that each donation is charitable, a pink "Certificate of Disbursement" is sent with the cheque.

The certificate should be completed by the Treasurer and returned to the Relief Chest office following payment of the money to the individual.

6. Support for Provincial Appeals for Masonic Charity Festivals and other Appeals

- 6.1. Provinces in Festival for the central Masonic Charities may wish to use the Relief Chest Scheme for the management of donations throughout the duration of the Festival Appeal.
- 6.2. In addition to all of the benefits of the Scheme, which are available to all Relief Chest holders, benefits to Festival Chest holders include:
 - comprehensive reports showing detailed analysis of contributing Lodges, Chapters and individual donors, which are available electronically;
 - reports to assist in the allocation of Festival honorifics, jewels etc.;
 - support for the administration of paperwork, records and statutory compliance, thus allowing the Province to concentrate on its fundraising efforts;
 - customised stationery; *i.e.* donation forms, envelopes, sponsorship forms;
 - assistance to the Festival Committee in guiding the Charity Stewards.
- 6.3. There are no costs to the Province for the services of the Relief Chest Scheme.

7. Honorific Office

- 7.1. Information on the qualifications for honorific office in each of the central Masonic Charities can be obtained from:

Masonic Charitable Foundation
60 Great Queen Street
London WC2B 5AZ

8. Statements and correspondence

- 8.1. All correspondence from the Relief Chest office will be sent to the appointed Relief Chest Representative, who is usually the only point of contact. If a new Relief Chest Representative is appointed by the Lodge etc., a Change of Representative form (available online at mcf.org/reliefchest or from the Relief Chest office) must be completed and signed by the new Relief Chest Representative **and** either the Secretary or Master (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge) (see further at 2.4 above). **NB A Relief Chest Representative need not necessarily be the Charity Steward.**
- 8.2. On behalf of the Relief Chest holder, the Relief Chest Representative will receive a detailed annual statement covering the Relief Chest's activity. When opening a Relief Chest, the Relief Chest holder must designate a twelve-month period for annual reporting. Each twelve-month period must end on the last day of a calendar month.
- 8.3. On request, the Relief Chest office will supply an interim statement to the Relief Chest Representative, covering all complete months in the Relief Chest's current financial year. Interim statements provide the same information as regular statements.
- 8.4. On request from the Relief Chest Representative, a Subscribers' List can also be provided, which will show all donations to the Relief Chest made by individuals, including direct debits, Gift Aid donations and donations from individuals not eligible for tax relief.

9. Dormant Chests

- 9.1. A dormant chest is a Relief Chest from which no payment has been made for two years.
- 9.2. To meet the expectations of HM Revenue & Customs that a Relief Chest has been opened for collecting and donating money to charity, it is important that The Grand Charity can demonstrate activity. A two-year period, during which no charitable donations have been made, requires investigation to confirm that the Relief Chest is being maintained according to the principles of the Relief Chest Scheme.
- 9.3. If a Relief Chest appears to be dormant, the Relief Chest office will write to the Relief Chest Representative to:
 - advise him that no payment has been made out of the Chest in the preceding two years.
 - seek an acceptable explanation for the inactivity (e.g. saving for a forthcoming Festival or other charitable event).
 - ascertain if the Chest holder seeks to reactivate the Chest.
 - find out if the Chest holder wishes to close the Chest.
 - notify the Relief Chest Representative that the Relief Chest will be closed if it is not re-activated or if a satisfactory explanation for the inactivity is not given.
- 9.4. If the Relief Chest Representative does not reply within three months, the Relief Chest office will write to the Secretary of the Lodge (or the equivalent if not a Lodge) requesting the information shown in 9.2 above within six months from the date of the letter.
- 9.5. In the absence of an acceptable explanation for the inactivity or if a Relief Chest is not reactivated or closed during the six-month period of notice, the Relief Chest will afterwards be deemed to be dormant and a letter will be sent to the Secretary of the Lodge (or other authorised officer if not a Lodge) notifying him of that fact. If no acceptable response is received within 21 days, any balance left in the dormant Relief Chest will be distributed equally among the four central Masonic Charities' general funds and the Relief Chest will be closed.

- 9.6. When the existence of a Chest holder's Lodge, Chapter, etc. is about to cease (either because it is about to surrender its warrant to amalgamate with another Lodge or Chapter or because it will no longer exist at all), it should resolve at a meeting prior to its dissolution to dispose of the balance in its Chest by making suitable charitable donations. The Relief Chest Representative should ensure that the relevant vouchers are submitted to the Relief Chest office before the date of closure, at which point the Relief Chest will become unattached. If no such request is received by the Relief Chest office, any balance left in the Chest of a Lodge, Chapter etc. that is known to have been dissolved, will be distributed equally among the four central Craft Charities and the Chest will be closed.
- 9.7. Payments made into a Relief Chest after the dissolution of the Lodge (or other if not a Lodge) or after the closure of a Relief Chest will be returned to the donor.

10. Administration costs

- 10.1. No direct charge will be made to Relief Chest holders for any of the services and administration of the Relief Chest Scheme, including the provision of stationery, forms and statements of holdings within the Relief Chest, but exceptional costs, such as legal fees incurred in dealing with legacies made for the benefit of a Relief Chest (see 3.2.1.4) may be deducted from a Relief Chest.
- 10.2. No deductions will be made from any of the interest earned on the investments of the Relief Chest funds or from any Gift Aid tax relief repayments.

11. Responsibilities and rights of The Grand Charity

- 11.1. The Grand Charity is responsible for meeting the requirements of HM Revenue & Customs, which does not permit Relief Chests to be used as a banking operation. The Relief Chest is intended to be an efficient vehicle from which donations to charitable causes should be made regularly. It must not be used for the purpose of accumulating or hoarding funds purely for investment purposes.
- 11.2. As a charity, The Grand Charity must comply with the legal requirements of charity law.
- 11.3. The Grand Charity reserves the right to recover from the donor any sums of money that The Grand Charity is required to repay to HM Revenue & Customs for any reason, including infringements of the benefit rules that apply to Gift Aid. Information on the benefit rules is available from HM Revenue & Customs.
- 11.4. The trustee of The Grand Charity shall be entitled to revise the rules and guidelines of the Scheme without any prior notification.
- 11.5. The trustee of The Grand Charity reserves the right to modify and terminate any service.
- 11.6. Issues of dispute or difference between the Relief Chest office and a Relief Chest holder or its Relief Chest Representative about the interpretation and operation of the Relief Chest Scheme, which cannot be settled between the parties, shall be referred to the trustee of The Grand Charity. The decision of the trustee shall be communicated in writing to the Chest holder's secretary or equivalent officer.

*Approved by the trustees of
The Grand Charity
16 March 2016*

NOTES

Relief Chest Name and Number:

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Relief Chest Representative:

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Appointed on:

NB

A Relief Chest Representative is not necessarily the Charity Steward. If a new Relief Chest Representative is appointed at any time, please remember to inform The Relief Chest Office.



Registered Charity number 1164703.

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. Company number 09751836.

On 1 April 2016, the Relief Chest Scheme of The Freemasons' Grand Charity (Registered Charity Number 281942) became part of the Masonic Charitable Foundation, a new charity for Freemasons, for families, for everyone. Please visit mcf.org.uk for further information.