



Welcome to your regular **Almoner's Briefing** produced by the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF). Maintaining support and contact with Lodge Members, widows and their families is at the heart of the role of the Almoner so we hope this Briefing will assist you and keep you abreast of relevant information.

❖ **Mental well-being** – the World Health Organization defines wellbeing as a state where everyone is able to realise their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental well-being is a crucial aspect of our life just as physical well-being is and should be taken care of. One in four people will experience some kind of mental health issue. Research carried out by the Mental Health Foundation suggests that those aged between 55 and 64 years old show a noticeable increase in the common forms of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. The following can all influence a person's mental well-being so it is important you look out for these when you are visiting somebody:

- Work pressures (or unemployment)
- Stress
- Relationship pressures (including bereavement and loss)
- Physical or psychological abuse (including 'online' abuse)
- Financial worries (including debt)
- Homelessness/housing pressures
- Addiction (drugs and alcohol dependency)
- Physical illness or injury
- Loneliness and social isolation

❖ **How you can help** – with the festive season now over and the winter blues setting in, people can feel particularly vulnerable and be susceptible to negative emotions and feelings of despair, which have the potential to escalate if they go unnoticed. When nurturing relationships old and new, the key thing to look out for is a change in the person's typical behaviour – this is a clue for understanding whether or not a Brother or dependent is struggling in their personal life.

You can help somebody who is struggling by offering them your time and a 'listening ear', as well as reassurance and positive words of encouragement to help themselves. It is important that they do the things that make them happiest – could you offer to help them by arranging transport to Lodge meetings or encourage them to take up practical or physical activities by joining a local group or club with a friend?

When you approach these important conversations you could start by saying “*it's good to see you and thank you for letting me visit.*” As the conversation moves on you could tactfully ask them how they have been feeling and for how long. This may give you a better understanding and sense of whether it is an ongoing situation. As Almoner it is important to be patient and allow the person time to open up to you, and as you do so you could ask them if there is anything you can do to help them with their situation. For more information download the MCF's Almoner's factsheet on the topic of mental health [here](#)

- ❖ **Support** – if you notice a change in somebody's typical behaviour or identify any of the signs linked to mental illness, such as tearfulness, loss of appetite or sudden changes in emotions or mood, you should gently encourage the person to speak to their GP or signpost them to an appropriate organisation. Your Metropolitan/Provincial Grand Almoner (MetGA/PGA) is a good point of contact and may be able to provide you with contact details for local organisations.
- ❖ **Information to share** – you are encouraged to read the following information out at your next Lodge meeting as part of your Almoner's Report or circulate to members of your Lodge. We will provide you with something suitable to share within each **Almoner's Briefing**. Read on for more information...

You will be pleased to know that Almoners across the Provinces have continued to contribute greatly to the work of the MCF. During the period 1 October to 31 December 2018 alone, a total of 1,668 grants were awarded to assist with financial, health and family needs, totalling £3,280,085. In addition, 95 people were provided access to the MCF's Counselling Careline for support.

Did you know that the MCF offers access to the Counselling Careline for anyone struggling to cope? The Counselling Careline is a free and confidential support service operated by trained counsellors who will listen to you, offer professional guidance and can arrange additional telephone or face-to-face sessions. Freemasons, their wives, partners or widows, as well as children between the ages of 17 - 25 who are in full-time education and, in certain cases, other adult dependents, can access the Counselling Careline. This is a free service and requires no form filling or application. Simply call the MCF on 0800 035 60 90 (calls are free).

We hope you have found our **Almoner's Briefing** useful. To provide any feedback please email masonicsupport@mcf.org.uk

Be the first to receive the latest news about the wider work of the MCF (and get a free MCF lapel pin!) by signing up to receive our regular e-newsletter at www.mcf.org.uk/sign-up. The e-newsletter contains further information, resources and stories about the MCF which may be of additional interest to you as Almoner.

Disclaimer: this information does not constitute legal advice and, while care has been taken to ensure that the information is accurate, up to date and useful, the MCF will not accept any legal liability in relation to the content.