



Masonic
Charitable Foundation

Issue 7 | **Autumn/Winter 2019**

Better Lives

**Supporting
positive mental
health and
wellbeing**

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Guest welcome “As a society, taking care of our own mental health and wellbeing is not always our number one priority – at least, that’s how it was for me.

As a carer for my partner, Gavin, I was constantly putting his health needs before my own. When my health took a turn for the worse, I couldn’t work and almost lost my home, before finally turning to the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) for help.

Admitting that we aren’t coping; that we’re tired, run-down, ill, or struggling with everyday life can feel like admitting weakness, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. It takes real strength to open up and share our vulnerabilities.

Throughout this issue of *Better Lives*, you can learn more about the importance of mental health and wellbeing. Read on to find out how the MCF is helping carers like me to cope with our responsibilities, as well as how their funding for charities is supporting people’s mental health in local communities, and how lesser-known support from the MCF is providing access to specialist mental health treatments.

Getting the right help at the right time allows you to deal with problems before they become completely overwhelming. It means embracing the opportunity to be your best and most healthy self and get the most out of life. So, if you are struggling to cope, don’t wait until you reach breaking point. Call the MCF today and discover how they could change your life for the better.”



Martin,
Full-time carer and voluntary
dog rescue worker

‘Man up, it’ll be fine!’ is a phrase that most of us will have heard many times.

Although often motivated by good intentions, being told to ‘man up’ can blur our understanding of what it means to be a man.

Traditionally, society has perceived masculinity as being strong, stoic, dominant and in control. Although these are not negative characteristics, research shows these traditional expectations can have a negative impact on mental health, and prevent men from opening up and asking for help.

In reality, being a man means being human, and being human means that at some point in your life, you may need the support of others.

Whether it’s emotionally, physically or practically, the MCF is ready and waiting to support anyone who is facing hardship – and we definitely won’t tell you to ‘man up’.

Meet Sean, Martin and Alan; three men whose decision to open up led to life-changing support. Now, they’re giving advice to their past selves, and to others who may be apprehensive about asking for help.



**Don't man up,
open up**

- 👤 **Sean**
- 🎂 **33 years old**
- 🎓 **High school learning mentor**
- 🏠 **West Lancashire freemason**

"Before my injury I was really into fitness and adventure. You'd usually find me up a mountain somewhere, hiking, rock climbing or mountaineering.

"One day, when I was out climbing, I lost my footing and slipped. I grabbed the rock face with my left arm which took the full weight and speed of my body falling. I completely tore my shoulder – it was agonising.

"I spent the next year and a half with a damaged shoulder until one night, when I was putting a jacket on, whatever was holding my shoulder intact just went, and my shoulder fell out of place.

"After that I was in constant pain. I struggled to dress myself or get out of the house, so I couldn't work. I went to hospital and they told me the waiting time for an operation to repair the damage would be nine months.

"It was awful, but the emotional implications were the worst. The fact that, quite possibly, I would never be able to do the things I loved again was hard to deal with."

"My father-in-law is also a freemason, so he suggested I should apply for support as I had nothing to lose. I was really hesitant at first as I didn't know whether my injury was serious enough to get help – I was just totally scared of rejection.

"I sent an email and within a month of getting in touch, I was in hospital having my operation. It felt like a massive weight had been lifted and my mental health slowly started to improve."

"I honestly don't know what I would have done without the MCF's support; it was my last chance at being able to move my arms and get back to the life I had before. I've even started hiking again and recently climbed Snowdonia!"



- 👤 **Martin**
- 🎂 **51 years old**
- 🐕 **Full-time carer and voluntary dog rescue worker**
- 🏠 **South Wales freemason**

"I've been with my partner, Gavin, for 18 years. Ten years ago, he started to become mentally unwell and that's when I became his full-time carer. Gavin has agoraphobia, severe depression and anxiety, and also suffers with snapping hip syndrome. He takes a lot of medication and I have to take him everywhere and be his constant support. Both our lives fall on my shoulders.

"I've been going through treatment for colon cancer, and this combined with the stress of everything else means I haven't been able to work. Recently, everything started to get too much. I did the best I could to get by but it became impossible. I couldn't afford to cover my rent or bills so I was served notice of eviction – I didn't know what to do. I was desperate, upset and incredibly low.

"I knew about the MCF but had never considered asking for

help myself. I was embarrassed as I thought their support was for more important situations than my own."

"If I'm honest, I don't think anyone really wants to ask for help, unless they're desperate. It got to a point where I had to do something as I would have nowhere to live, so I gave the MCF a call.

"An MCF Visiting Volunteer met me to take me through the application process. Together, we filled in the forms and sent them off; it was so simple and there was no judgement whatsoever.

"The MCF said that they'd make an emergency payment to clear my arrears so I could keep my home, and they also supported me with a daily living expense grant to help me back onto my feet.

"The support gave me breathing room to focus on my own health as well as Gavin's; I started sleeping a little better and it meant I stopped worrying about being homeless – something I really didn't need adding to my stress."

"I'm just so pleased I gave them a call – I realised that it doesn't matter what your situation is, if they can help you and you're eligible, they will."



🗣️ My advice to my past self

I know you... feel there is no way out of your current situation.

It's okay to... talk and open up, and tell people about your circumstances. If you discuss it rather than keep it to yourself, your situation could get better.

Contacting the MCF is... not scary and they will help you resolve your situation.

Don't worry about... sharing your feelings and concerns. Your friends, family and the MCF are not there to judge.

The support received will... improve your mental health and help you to get back to the person you want to be.

You will feel... so much better in yourself.

🗣️ My advice to my past self

I know you're... feeling worried and down at the moment.

Don't worry about... anything – the MCF is there to help you. They're all really friendly and will give you the best advice.

It's okay to... ask for help if you're in a dark place and need support. That's what they're there for.

Contacting the MCF is... the best decision you could possibly make.

The support received will... change your life, and your wife and daughter's.

You will feel... unbelievably relieved and like you should have contacted them sooner!

- Alan
- 50 years old
- Veteran
- Norfolk freemason

"Policing in the RAF was pretty much exactly the same as any other police force. I would do foot patrols and community policing; road traffic and crossing control for primary school children on the base; I was investigating crimes and arresting people – everything!

"When I was in the Middle East, there was an incident involving an aircraft which I had to investigate, and it was from this that I developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The effects of trauma don't always show straight away – sometimes it takes a while for something to be the straw that breaks the camel's back, which is what happened to me a few months later. That breaking point turned into hospital visits, sedation, lots of time off work and the RAF mental health team intervening. I carried on for another three years until my health, both physically and mentally, got to a point where I was medically discharged.

"The day after I was discharged, I got a phone call from the RAF medical team. It wasn't an order as I wasn't in the military anymore, but it was a 'go to the doctor, now' conversation – so that's what I did. I went to my

GP, but the support I needed wasn't available on the NHS. My GP suggested a veteran's charity, so I spent some time with them. Once again, I didn't fit into their treatment programme because of the complex trauma, so they also discharged me.

"My family was struggling financially, I wasn't attending lodge meetings, and I was ignoring phone calls and emails. I don't think anybody really likes to go cap-in-hand asking for anything, but when you get as low as I did, you have to do something. I reached out to my almoner and he put me in touch with the MCF."

"Thanks to the MCF, I've now been having the treatment I need with an incredible therapist who specialises in eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy (EMDR). The EMDR is helping with the traumatic images; it's not a quick process as there are so many, but I really do feel now that we are starting to make progress and I'm finding daily life much easier.

"I can honestly say the treatment that I should have got years ago, is working. I don't know how, but it is."

If you have a financial, health, family or care-related need that's having a negative impact on your mental health or wellbeing – it's okay to ask for help.

Contact us today to discuss how we can support you, including how to access our confidential counselling service:

- 0800 035 60 90
- help@mcf.org.uk
- mcf.org.uk/support

My advice to my past self

I know you're... struggling, but you will get through it.

Focus on... yourself instead of your other worries, like money – it's just a tool, it's not something that should control your life.

It's okay to... cry.

Contacting the MCF is... easy!

The support received will... be nothing but positive.

You will feel... like a completely different person.



#StoriesThatMakeUs

Watch Alan tell his story, and help us keep the conversation going by sharing it on social media with #StoriesThatMakeUs.

mcf.org.uk/impact/alans-story

A day in the life



My alarm goes off...

...between 6:30 and 7am. I'm lucky to live close enough that I can walk to work, which takes around 45 minutes. It's a really relaxing start to the day, and it's nice not having to squeeze onto the train with other commuters!

I start my day at work...

...by having a big glass of water and making a cup of tea. The first thing I do once I sit down at my desk is check the emails and voicemails we've received overnight, flagging anything urgent as a priority.

A typical day is...

...busy! We get a lot of calls and emails every day, which are always extremely varied and often from people who are very distressed. We support people of all ages who can be facing a wide range of sometimes very complex issues, and so we need to have a large amount of knowledge to ensure we can respond appropriately to everyone's unique situation.

We take it in turns...

...to take a break from answering calls. As well as talking to people on the phone, the team also needs to create records, assign them to other members of the team and process applications. The

Martin is one of our enquiries and grants officers. For many people, he is the first point of contact when enquiring about support.

schedule helps us to focus on people's enquiries individually, particularly where someone is in real distress and needs support urgently.

At lunchtime...

...I always make sure to get away from my desk and switch off for an hour. It's an emotionally-demanding job so I try to take care of myself by eating something healthy and taking a walk outside.

We try to support people's emotional and mental wellbeing...

...by offering access to our counselling service. Often people will call with one specific issue, but as we talk, it becomes clear that they aren't coping very well and could benefit from counselling. We might also refer them to a member of our Advice & Support Team, who are very knowledgeable about what mental health support is available locally.

If someone rings who doesn't have a connection to a freemason, we will signpost them to other organisations including Mind, which is an excellent mental health charity.

My most memorable moment...

...was my first urgent enquiry.

It was a family who were facing an eviction notice, and the mum was also going through chemotherapy. The whole situation was also having a massive impact on their mental health so it was vital that we provided support as soon as possible. Fortunately, we were able to help.

The hardest part of my job is...

...giving bad news. Sometimes people are facing hardship, but they don't qualify for support. We always try to signpost them to other organisations that can help, but it's still hard to say no.

The best part of my job is...

...being there for people when they are in need. When someone loses their job or has a health need, their emotional and mental wellbeing also takes a hit. When we pick up the phone we aren't just helping them apply for a grant, we are also providing a listening ear which can be comforting in itself.

After work...

I enjoy Samba dancing, which is incredible exercise and releases plenty of endorphins!



Our grants and enquiries team is trained to support you through a difficult time.

If you have a financial, health, family or care-related need get in touch with them today.

- 0800 035 60 90
- help@mcf.org.uk
- mcf.org.uk/support

In the spotlight: Wellbeing in the community



Across England and Wales, freemasons are supporting hundreds of charities that are working to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Freemasonry's commitment to supporting those struggling with mental health problems has allowed the MCF to give:

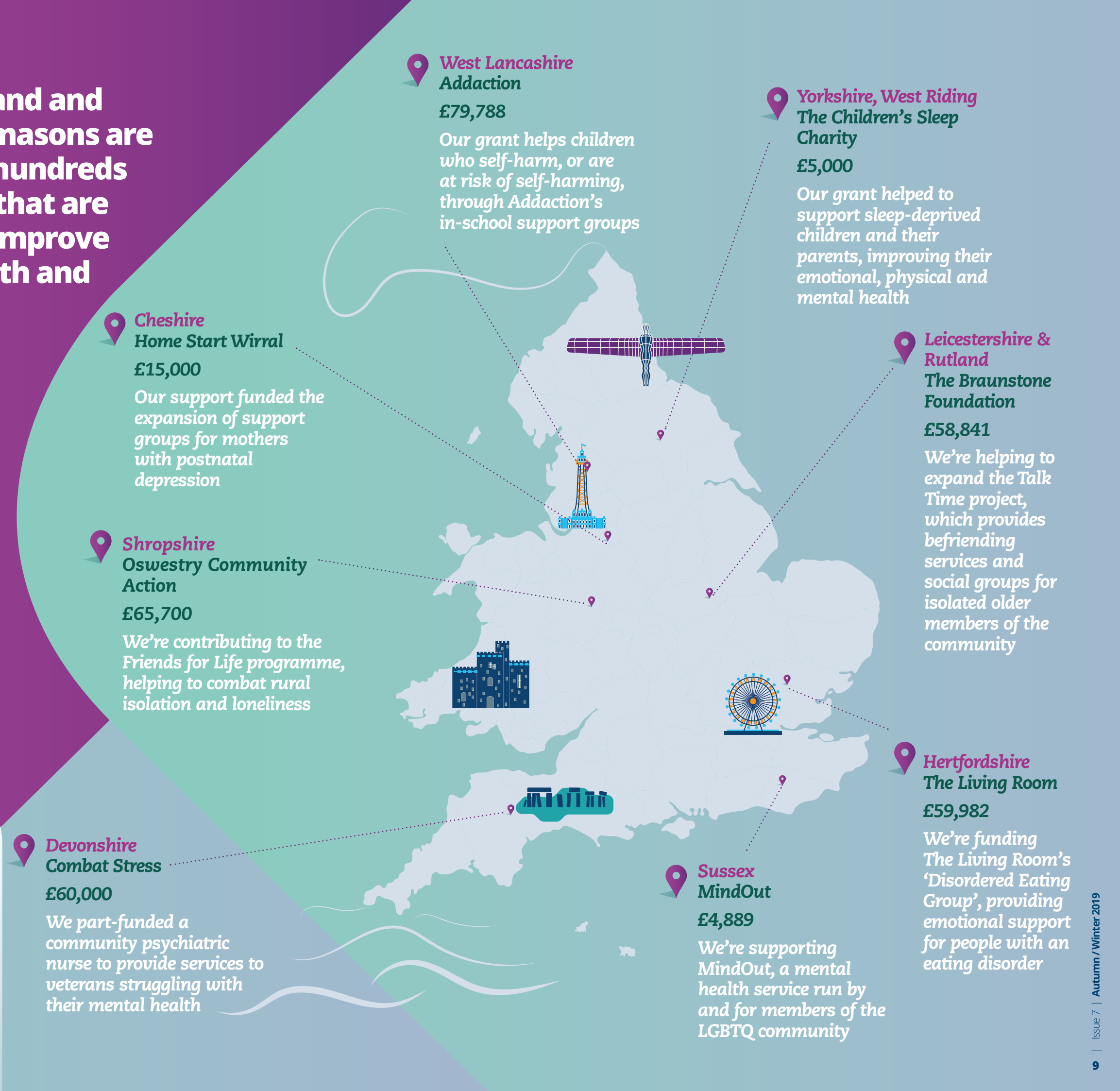
Over 125 grants totalling £2,806,836

since 2016, to charities or projects working in mental health, including dementia and bereavement support.

From befriending schemes to counselling services; veteran outreach centres to advice and support for new mothers; freemasonry's work is helping charities continue to provide vital services that lift up and improve the wellbeing of their communities.

Explore how freemasonry's support for local charities is having an impact on your community:

impact.mcf.org.uk/yourcommunity





Who cares for the carer?

Carer \ Carer \

Definition of Carer



A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.” NHS England

1 in 5 carers are forced to give up work



As the average age of the population rises, so does the number of people who find themselves providing unpaid care for a loved one. In fact, people aged 50 – 70 years old are most likely to provide ‘informal’ or unpaid care. This can be anything from everyday tasks such as helping someone out of bed, to emotionally supporting a person struggling with mental illness.

Many people take on the role of carer whilst trying to juggle other work and family commitments, with some even unaware that they are classed as a carer by NHS and government guidelines.

Whilst unpaid care has an estimated value of £132 billion a year, it can come at great personal cost to a carer’s financial stability and personal wellbeing. In fact, a recent survey by Carers UK reported

that 64% of those surveyed said they focussed on the needs of those they care for and not on their own. A further 81% said they had felt lonely and isolated as a result of caring.

6.5 million people in the UK are unpaid carers

Our question is: who cares for the carer?

There are many organisations and charities across England and Wales that are dedicated to providing emotional and practical support for carers – including the MCF. Last year we helped 50 families with respite care, allowing carers time to focus on other parts of life with the reassurance that their care will be provided to loved ones.

Respite care: how can we support you?

Domiciliary care

We can arrange for paid carers to come to your home and support you with areas of care that you struggle to provide by yourself.

Residential care

We can fund up to six weeks of residential or nursing home care per year, giving you a break from caring when you need it most.

If you are already receiving respite care from social services, we can provide top up grants to support you.

Sheila is one carer we've supported



58% of carers are women

“My husband, David, is an ex-military man and was always very fit. He skied, ran marathons, climbed mountains – you name it, he did it.

“One day last year, David suffered a huge stroke. It was a life-changing moment for both of us. The stroke paralysed him which meant he couldn’t do anything for himself; he was a prisoner in his own home as our house just wasn’t equipped for his needs.

“I went to the council to enquire about adapting our bathroom to help David at home, as we could only give him bed baths. They said I could have an interest-free loan, but I didn’t know how I was going

to pay it back. I was running out of options and then I stumbled across an advert for the MCF – that’s how I found out about them and the support they can provide for freemasons like David.

“The MCF paid for our house to be adapted to suit David’s needs, but this meant living in a building site for a little while.

“David decided he wanted to go into a residential home whilst the work on the house was taking place, as he wouldn’t have coped well. The MCF supported us with

respite care and David chose the home that he wanted to stay in.”

“I find it hard to have David in a care home, but it’s what he wanted and it meant that I wasn’t worried about how he’d react to everything going on around him.

“Although life is hard and I’m still adjusting, the MCF and local freemasons have been brilliant – I can’t praise them enough to be honest. I am so incredibly grateful for everything they’ve done to help us, it’s truly been lifesaving.”



Are you a carer? We are here to help. Get in touch with us today to explore ways in which we can support you:

☎ 0800 035 60 90
@ help@mcf.org.uk
🌐 mcf.org.uk/support

68% of carers use their own income or savings to cover the cost of care



What our beneficiaries say

We recently completed our second annual beneficiary survey to gain a better understanding of the impact our support makes on freemasons and their families, as well as their experiences of enquiring and applying for support. This second annual survey also provided the opportunity to compare their expectations and experiences with the results of last year's survey.

We are happy to see that the results show an improvement on the results of last year's survey. To achieve such positive feedback requires a high level of commitment and professionalism from every team across the MCF – we work together to make it as easy and straightforward as possible for you to access the help you need, when you need it.

Of those who reported anxiety before contacting us, the majority indicated that their stress levels had been almost completely eradicated following notification that they would receive a grant.

The majority of our beneficiaries, both repeat and new, found out about MCF support through their lodge or provincial almoner, which reminds us of the importance of providing resources for these important volunteers.

Almost a third of the people we helped were made aware of other types of support they were eligible for in addition to that they had initially applied for.

It has come to our attention that many of you are not aware of the full range of grants and support services that we offer. *Better Lives* is one of the ways we are working on this, and you can learn more at

mcf.org.uk/support

★★★★★ Response times

Of the first time beneficiaries surveyed, almost all felt that the response time to their enquiry met or exceeded their expectations. Additionally, of those who applied, the vast majority were happy with the length of time it took for their application to be processed.

2018/19

98%

Compared to 2017/18

+5%

★★★★★ Communication

Almost all first time beneficiaries surveyed reported that the application process was explained clearly to them and they were made aware of how long the process may take.

97%

+4%

★★★★★ Staff

We were happy to hear that almost all applicants felt the Enquiry Officer's knowledge and professionalism when responding to their enquiry either met or exceeded their expectations.

99%

+2%

★★★★★ Application experience

A staggering 99% felt the process of applying for support was a positive experience – we hope this encourages you to get in touch if you have a financial, health, family or care-related need.

99%

+6%

★★★★★ Grant size

We put a great deal of research and thought into our policies to ensure that the support we provide is fit for purpose, so it was reassuring that 99% of those surveyed were satisfied with the size of their grant.

99%

+6%

Do you have a financial, health, family or care-related need? We maybe able to help.

Get in touch with your lodge almoner or contact us today:

☎ 0800 035 60 90

@ help@mcf.org.uk

🌐 mcf.org.uk/support

We help families in every province across England and Wales, including yours.

	No. of people
Bedfordshire	26
Berkshire	39
Bristol	17
Buckinghamshire	47
Cambridgeshire	18
Cheshire	115
Cornwall	87
Cumberland and Westmorland	31
Derbyshire	59
Devonshire	114
Dorset	53
Durham	109
East Kent	131
East Lancashire	141
Essex	164
Gloucestershire	61
Guernsey and Alderney	2
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	142
Herefordshire	21
Hertfordshire	60
Isle of Man	1
Jersey	1
Leicestershire and Rutland	57
Lincolnshire	61
Metropolitan Grand Lodge of London	336
Middlesex	63
Monmouthshire	27
Norfolk	64
North Wales	56
Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire	77
Northumberland	89
Nottinghamshire	42
Oxfordshire	19
Shropshire	13
Somerset	76
South Wales	154
Staffordshire	62
Suffolk	48
Surrey	90
Sussex	148
Warwickshire	70
West Kent	70
West Lancashire	322
West Wales	30
Wiltshire	30
Worcestershire	45
Yorkshire, North and East Ridings	99
Yorkshire, West Riding	99
Overseas UGLE Districts	33
Others	21

GRAND TOTAL

3,740



Lots of people know that we can fund an operation or provide grants to cover daily living expenses – but we can provide much more, and many people are unaware of the full range of support available from the MCF.

Here, we examine a couple of the lesser-known ways we are supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Specialist Clinical Intervention

Each year, we help around 250 people through our counselling service, but for some people, counselling is not appropriate and cannot meet their needs.

Specialist Clinical Interventions (SCI) offer mental health support that is more in-depth than ordinary counselling and there are several types – the most common being Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

How to access SCI

To receive SCI, you should first access our counselling service. A counsellor will establish if they can meet your needs and, if necessary, will carry out a full mental health assessment. This assessment is carried out over the telephone and will determine what type of treatment is best for you. Treatment can be provided over the phone or face-to-face, whichever you prefer.

Unlike our standard counselling service, a full financial assessment is needed for the MCF to consider support for SCI. However, our grants team will always treat these applications as a priority, so the time from application to approval can be very quick.

Educational assessments

Autism, dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can all have a huge impact on a child's education and wellbeing – especially if they are undiagnosed. Undergoing an assessment is the first step, but long waiting lists and the prohibitive costs of funding a private assessment mean that many children are not getting the support they need.

How to access an educational assessment

Anyone seeking an assessment for autism, dyslexia or ADHD needs to first be referred by their GP or school to local support. Once referred, if you're facing a significant wait from the local authority, we can consider funding a private assessment for your child or grandchild. This will also require a full financial assessment, but once approved, our support can significantly decrease waiting times and alleviate costs associated with getting your child the support they need.

Can we help you? To access SCI or an educational assessment, or to explore other ways in which we can support you, get in touch:

☎ 0800 035 60 90
 @ help@mcf.org.uk
 🌐 mcf.org.uk/support



When 9-year-old Grace began to struggle at school, single-mum Rachel wondered if an underlying spectrum disorder was having an impact on her wellbeing.

"Grace had always struggled a bit with school, but when she turned nine, everything seemed to escalate. She'd get really frustrated with herself over school tests and would come home crying. PE was also really hard – the noise and the smells would upset her. She'd bottle it all up and take it out on me, which was really stressful."

Grace was referred by her GP for an autism assessment, but faced a two-year wait to be seen. Unable to pay for a private assessment, Rachel worried that two years without appropriate support would significantly damage Grace's emotional, educational and social development. By mentioning this to her grants officer, we were able to support Rachel and Grace with an educational assessment.

Grace has now been diagnosed as having high functioning autism, meaning that Rachel can work with the school to ensure that Grace has a suitable educational healthcare plan in place.

"To anyone else in a similar situation, I'd say that they should definitely ask for help! I had just assumed that I was on my own, but you really never know until you ask."

Grace and Rachel





There are currently over 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK, with this number expected to rise to over one million by 2025.

According to a recent study, over half of those living with dementia (55%) are in the mild stages.

This means that although their symptoms will be noticeable, a person living with mild dementia can still be fairly independent and should be able to do most things, either in a different way than before or with a

little bit of help. We invited RMBI Care Co.'s Pharmacy and Dementia Specialist Lead, Anne Child, to explain dementia and how we can support people living with the disease.

What is dementia?

A common misconception of dementia is that it's a disease of old age and only relates to memory loss. It is well known that the biggest risk factor for dementia is age, but there are over 42,000 people under 65 living with dementia in the UK. Dementia is a progressive degenerative disease; a disruption in the brain that starts slowly and gradually worsens over time, touching every area of a person's life. This makes dementia an extremely difficult condition to live with, as it can affect people's ability to do the most basic everyday activities.

How do you get dementia?

Science is still looking for the precise cause of the disease and a treatment to prevent it. What we do know is there are some ways in which you can help reduce the risks

associated with vascular dementia, such as looking after your general health and wellbeing, particularly in your 40s and 50s. Unfortunately, this does not apply for other types of dementia, such as Alzheimer's, where the causes are still unknown.

What are the symptoms of dementia?

A person's experience of living with dementia will be unique and individual to them. In fact, people with dementia may only have the diagnosis and a few symptoms in common, such as memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or speaking. If you are concerned that you or a loved one might have dementia, the first thing you should do is visit your GP for an initial screening. Other treatable conditions have similar symptoms to some of the early signs of dementia, so your GP may send you to a memory clinic for more thorough testing.

How can you support someone with dementia?

Knowing how to support people living with dementia is a continuous learning process, as everyone's experience is different. We have to take care of every individual in a holistic way – medically, emotionally and socially. For example, supporting people to stay connected to friends and family; encouraging them to find a new hobby; or putting signs around their house to help them in their daily life, can help people living with dementia to maintain their independence for as long as possible. It's essential to support not only the individual person affected, but their carer too. Carers often have a huge responsibility for the person they are caring for, which can affect their mental health and wellbeing.



What is RMBI Care Co. doing to support people with dementia?



At RMBI Care Co, we are aware that residents with dementia need care and support from professional staff in a homely environment. Barford Court in Hove is one of our homes that provides a dedicated Dementia Support House to care for residents with dementia in a welcoming environment, where they can enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities. The home is carefully designed, paying

attention to sensory items – colourful and comfortable furniture, tactile cushions, soft lighting in communal areas and background music. We encourage a culture of understanding people with dementia in all our homes; this helps our residents to live with dignity and maintain their independence for as long as possible, as well as helping them to engage in meaningful

activities. In 2017, we started a partnership with Alzheimer's Society to incorporate their 'Dementia Friends' scheme into our staff induction training. Becoming a Dementia Friend means that you learn a little more about dementia so you can help people within your community, and we're pleased to say we now have over 400 Dementia Friends within RMBI Care Co.

To find out more about RMBI Care Co.'s dementia services or any RMBI home, including services, locations, eligibility and advice, get in touch:

☎ 0207 596 2400

@ enquiries@rmbi.org.uk

🌐 rmbi.org.uk



Ask the almoner



Our resident almoner answers your questions about the support we provide.

I am feeling low and am considering talking to a counsellor. Does the MCF support counselling?

Yes – You can call our enquiries team who will explain how to access our counselling service, which is a 24-hour phone line. By contacting the counselling service, you can access the support you need, whether face-to-face or over the phone. The counselling service is completely confidential, so no one in your lodge will have access to this information unless you choose to tell them.

My child has just started university and is struggling to fit in. Would you expect them to access their university counselling services before coming to the MCF?

No – Dependent children or grandchildren between the ages of 17–25 and in full-time education can access the counselling service, regardless of any other support available to them. Dependent children under the age of 17 will not be able to access the service, but the MCF may still be able to provide alternative options for counselling. It's best to call the enquiries team for more information.

I have already received support in the past, but I am struggling in other areas of my life. Can I ask for help again?

Yes – The MCF frequently hears about people who have previously received support but are still struggling for other reasons, and don't realise they can get further help. Whether you've already had support or not, if you're going through a difficult time – get in touch!

☎ 0800 035 60 90

4 steps to mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique to help you focus on what's happening in the present moment in your mind, body and surroundings. Mindfulness is a popular exercise to help manage day-to-day wellbeing, as it can allow a person to feel calmer and more able to cope with thoughts and feelings.

1 Breathe carefully

Focusing just on your breathing can help to narrow down your thoughts, making you aware of the present moment and nothing else.

2 Pay attention

Increase your awareness of the world around you by using your senses. When you're out and about, try focusing on each of your senses individually for one minute. It's amazing what you can hear, smell, see, touch and taste when you're tuned in.

3 Notice your thoughts

Recognise which activities make you 'zone out'. When your mind wanders, notice where your thoughts have gone and try to bring yourself back to the present moment.

4 Make it short and sweet

Many people find mindfulness easier to stick to when it's in regular short periods of time rather than occasional long ones. Build mindfulness into your day – perhaps when you're in the shower, cooking, or having a cup of tea.

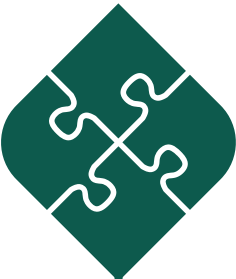
“You've spoken!”

“I am writing to thank you for your continued support over the last three years with educational support for my degree. I've just finished my bachelors in songwriting at the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance and achieved a 1st class honours!”

“The last three years have been transformative for me. Although suffering from some setbacks in my first year with my mental health, I was able to pull through. I am in a position now where I can really see a future for myself.”

– Katie, via email

Puzzles for prizes



Complete the crossword to win a £50 John Lewis voucher!

The answers to the crossword can all be found in this issue of *Better Lives*. Once you have completed the crossword, unscramble the letters in the grey squares to spell a word related to freemasonry. All entrants who submit the correct answer will be entered into a draw to win a £50 John Lewis voucher.

Across

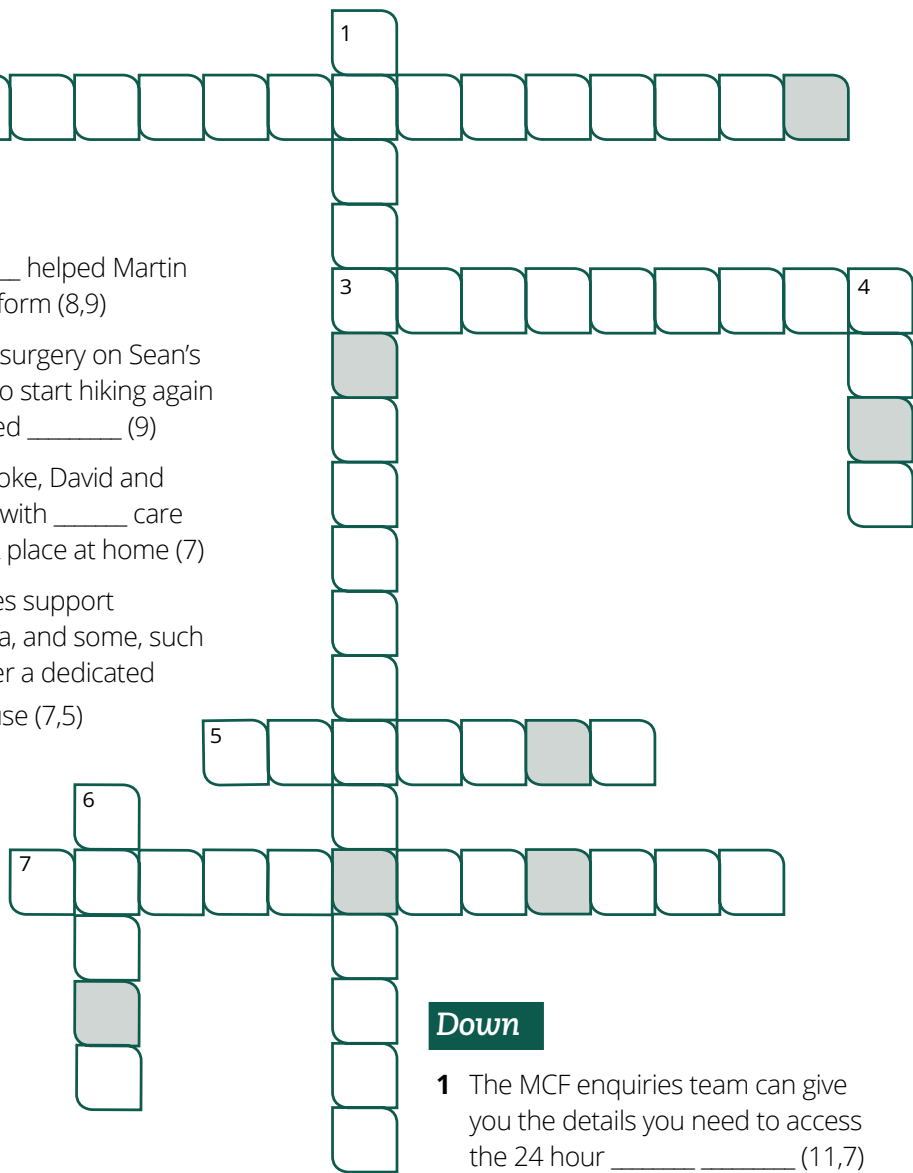
- 2 An MCF _____ helped Martin to fill in an application form (8,9)
- 3 Once the MCF paid for surgery on Sean's shoulder, he was able to start hiking again and has recently climbed _____ (9)
- 5 After a life changing stroke, David and Sheila were supported with _____ care whilst adaptations took place at home (7)
- 7 All our RMBI care homes support residents with dementia, and some, such as _____ even offer a dedicated Dementia Support House (7,5)

How to enter:

Write your crossword answer and/or circle the five differences you spot in the photos clearly on the tear-off flap. Fill in your details on the reverse of the flap and send it to:

Masonic Charitable Foundation, 60 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5AZ

The winner will be notified before the next issue of *Better Lives* is printed.



Down

- 1 The MCF enquiries team can give you the details you need to access the 24 hour _____ (11,7)
- 4 The MCF can fund a private autism, dyslexia, or _____ assessment for children facing a long wait from the local authority (1,1,1,1)
- 6 MCF grants officer, Martin enjoys _____ dancing as a way of unwinding after work (5)



Write your crossword answer here:

Spot the difference and win a £25 John Lewis voucher!

Pictured below are David and Sheila who featured in this issue of *Better Lives*.

To be in with a chance of winning a £25 John Lewis gift card, simply spot the five differences between the two photos!

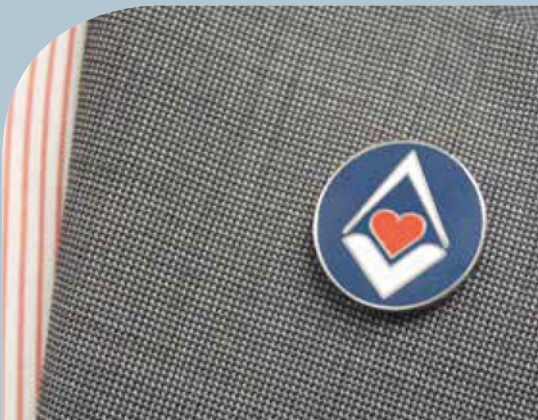


Congratulations to Shirley Tilley

who correctly identified the word 'festival' in last issue's crossword – a £50 John Lewis voucher is in the post!

Well done to Mike Gibbons

who spotted all five differences in last issue's spot the difference – a £25 John Lewis voucher is on its way!



> Follow our work and receive our exclusive lapel pin

Register for email updates about the work of the MCF and receive future issues of *Better Lives* through the post!

Name

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Email

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Full address

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Postcode

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I am a

☐

Freemason

☐

Interested person

☐

Family member

☐

Charity representative

If you are a freemason, please tell us the name of your province and indicate whether you are one of the following:

Province

☐

Worshipful master

☐

Secretary

☐

Almoner

☐

Charity steward

☐

None of the above

Please return this form to:

Masonic Charitable Foundation
60 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5AZ
Alternatively, visit mcf.org.uk/sign-up

The Masonic Charitable Foundation takes your privacy seriously and we will keep your personal information private and secure. Please visit mcf.org.uk/privacy for further information.



How do I know if someone is struggling with their mental health?

Sometimes, it will seem obvious when a friend or family member is going through a difficult time. However, being able to spot the signs of poor mental health can allow you to respond and support your loved one, and perhaps encourage them to seek further help. Here are four common signs and symptoms of someone struggling with their mental health:

1 Finding it hard to cope with daily life

A person may feel overwhelmed with day-to-day life and find it difficult to manage everyday tasks, such as cooking a meal or cleaning their home.

2 Significant changes in personality or emotion

Is your loved one showing uncharacteristic emotions such as anxiety or anger? Have they lost interest or enjoyment in things they used to like?

3 Social withdrawal and isolation

Many people experiencing mental health problems become more isolated and withdrawn, choosing to spend time alone over socialising with friends and family.

4 Lack of concern over their own health and wellbeing

Mental health problems can cause people to lose concern over their appearance or personal hygiene, and can sometimes cause exaggerated behaviour such as excessive eating or drinking, or abnormal sleeping hours.



Download our mental health factsheet for more information on the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, and ways in which you can support someone who's struggling

 mcf.org.uk/factsheets







Can we help you?

For advice about the support we offer and how to apply, contact us today:

0800 035 60 90 
help@mcf.org.uk 



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