

Explaining our Theory of Change for the Children and Young People and Later Life grants programmes

This document is intended to help charities that are thinking of applying for a grant through one of our programmes, as well as our grantees and the wider charity sector to understand the rationale behind the activities we undertake.

Our Theory of Change is a blueprint for achieving our long-term goal and helps us to reflect upon the changes we want to make and how we can make them happen. It is also a useful framework for evaluating progress toward our goal.

Through our grantmaking, we believe we can contribute to creating the best start in life for disadvantaged children and young people, and also to reducing isolation for those in later life. We do this by providing grants to charities that directly achieve the desired outcomes we seek for their service users in many different ways. Our Theory of Change connects our mission – our desired long-term impact – to our grantmaking and the work our grantees carry out.

The first column in the Theory of Change diagram lists the activities through which we try to effect change; the second column shows the short-term outcomes of those activities over 1 – 3 years (typically the length of our grants); and the third column describes longer-term outcomes (4 years and beyond). All outcomes are categorised by the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), target-group beneficiaries, and charities, dependent on the group to which the outcome relates.

As with all Theories of Change, the diagram shows simplified pathways to achieving these outcomes, however the realities of charitable organisations and people's lives are complex and there will be many factors that may have a positive or negative influence that could affect the actual outcomes.

MCF mission

Our mission is to be a force for good by **supporting other charities to help the most disadvantaged people in society**. We offer large grants (project funding) and small grants (unrestricted core funding), giving charities the best opportunity to provide vital services to their beneficiaries, develop processes, test innovative approaches and strengthen the sector as a whole.

Our programmes

Opportunities for Children and Young People

We fund charities that support disadvantaged children and young people to overcome the various barriers they face to achieving the best possible start in life. By targeting our support, we hope that the children and young people benefitting from these charities will lead healthier, happier lives and gain the opportunity to achieve as much as their peers.

Later Life Inclusion

We fund charities that work to reduce loneliness and social isolation in later life, helping older people to overcome the barriers they face to actively participate in society. By supporting these charities, we hope that older people will live more positive, happy, sociable and healthy lives, and feel better supported to take an active role in society, should they so wish.

Barriers

In both our Children and Young People and Later Life programmes, we have identified many barriers that our target groups face, the most common being: poverty, disability, poor health and inadequate local services and support. Additionally, there are barriers specific to each target group; life transitions including retirement, illness or bereavement can impact older people, whilst being in care can impact younger people.

Scope of funding

From small local charities to large household names, the organisations we fund vary greatly in size and reach. Similarly, the activities and services offered are hugely varied and can include befriending, outreach sessions, counselling, education and learning. The level of support given to the charities will depend on the nature of the projects. All organisations must use the awarded funds on projects and services in England and Wales.

The evidence supporting our work in these areas

Opportunities for Children and Young People

The early years of a child's life are crucial in shaping their adulthood. The period between conception and two years old is widely recognised as the most important period for physical, cognitive and emotional development; children that experience neglect, violence or deprivation during that time often develop emotional and behavioural problems, and quickly fall behind in educational attainment.

Additionally, a report from the Education Policy Institute identifies that, regardless of the level of educational attainment or overall educational ability, children from the most deprived fifth of families are overtaken at school by those from the least deprived fifth of families between the ages of seven and 16. This ability gap grows wider at every following stage of education.¹ Another study showed that barely half of children known to be eligible for free school meals have reached a good level of development by the age of five, compared with almost 70 per cent of their wealthier peers.²

In addition to those in poverty, children with special educational needs are also three times less likely than non-disabled children to achieve in education.

From the very beginning of a child's life, disadvantage impacts negatively across the physical, mental and learning developments of a child but there is enough evidence to show that correct interventions can significantly improve the situation and outcomes for the Children and Young People target beneficiaries.³ Unfortunately, many local authorities do not provide enough support and funding to advance this; and between 2010–11 and 2019–20 the early intervention allocation from central government to local authorities would have fallen by an estimated 71 per cent in real terms.⁴

Later Life Inclusion

The UK has a rapidly aging population and the number of individuals experiencing loneliness and isolation is increasing. The older we become the more likely we are to live alone and be at greater risk of isolation, loneliness and depression. One survey on behalf of Age UK indicates that a significant number of older people in the UK say that television or pets are their main form of company⁵. Research indicates that there are clear links between inequality, social isolation and health⁶, and social isolation and loneliness impact an individual's quality of life and wellbeing, adversely affecting health and therefore increasing their use of social and health services. A 2017 report from the London School of Economics highlights that the 'loneliness epidemic' costs public services around £6,000 per person supported, whilst overall spend on social care for older people was cut by £160 million between 2010/11 and 2015/16.⁷

Unrestricted core funding

There is high demand within the charity sector for unrestricted core funding; research from the John Ellerman Foundation says that 93 per cent of charities 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they would like more core funding that is unrestricted.⁸ A 2017 House of Lords select committee report highlights that many of their witnesses reported that charities had increasing difficulty funding their core costs, a well-known funding problem across the sector.⁹ Unrestricted core funding is often seen as a way to strengthen the sector as a whole and build strong organisations, however, it is often much more than that as organisations have an opportunity to improve their performance and develop innovative solutions to meet the needs of beneficiaries.¹⁰

¹ Hutchinson J. et al (2016) Divergent pathways: the disadvantage gap, accountability and the pupil premium, Education Policy Institute, London

² Social Mobility Commission (2016) State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain.

³ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) Early Intervention.

⁴ Action for Children, National Children's Bureau, the Children's Society (2016) Losing in the long run: trends in early intervention funding.

⁵ TNS (2014) TNS Loneliness Omnibus Survey for Age UK.

⁶ Durcan, D. Bell, R (2015) Reducing social isolation across the lifecourse. UCL Institute of Health Equity, Public Health England.

⁷ McDaid, D. et al (2017) Making the Economic Case for Investing in Actions to Prevent and/or Tackle Loneliness: A Systematic Review. Personal Social Services Research Unit, London School of Economics.

⁸ Saxton, J. Lindstrom, E (2012) Taking nothing for granted: a research report into what charities think a model grant-maker looks like. NFP Synergy, John Ellerman Foundation.

⁹ House of Lords, Select Committee on Charities (2017) Stronger charities for a stronger society.

¹⁰ Cairns, B. Mills, C. Ridley, S. (2013) Thinking about... *Core Funding*. Institute for Voluntary Action.

Examples of grants we have awarded to help achieve our goals

Children and Young People	Later Life
<p>TwentyTwenty – £35,000</p> <p>TwentyTwenty was awarded a grant to fund the Journey to Work programme. The programme supports young people with complex needs such as mental health conditions and low-to-medium learning difficulties by enrolling them onto an eight-month programme of education, life and work skills, work experience and counselling. During the programme, they they will be supported by volunteer mentors who will help prepare them for either work or further education.</p>	<p>Father Hudson's Care – £74,101</p> <p>Father Hudson's Care was awarded a grant to fund a men's outreach worker for the Young at Heart Men's Project, helping to tackle social isolation among older men. The project provides a wide range of activities for men to get involved with including metalwork, pottery-making, gardening and social groups.</p>
<p>Essex Cricket Foundation – £15,000</p> <p>The Essex Cricket Foundation was given a grant to fund a specialist wheelchair cricket coach, thereby encouraging more wheelchair users to get into sport.</p>	<p>Living Paintings – £40,000</p> <p>Living Paintings was given a grant to engage older blind and partially-sighted people with a range of topics including gardening, history and art. The project's aim is to reduce loneliness by encouraging people to get out of the house and take part in creative activities.</p>
<p>WellChild – £110,000</p> <p>WellChild was awarded a grant to fund a specialist nurse in Derby, who arranges and coordinates the care of seriously-ill children at home, enabling the children to spend more time at home and less time in hospital.</p>	<p>Brendoncare Clubs – £29,800</p> <p>Brendoncare Clubs was given a grant to fund friendship and activity clubs for older people across Hampshire and Dorset, supporting them in living active and independent lives.</p>
<p>Womankind Bristol Women's Therapy Centre – £3,600</p> <p>Womankind Bristol Women's Therapy Centre was awarded a grant for core funding to help continue counselling, group psychotherapy, befriending and helpline support services to women in Bristol.</p>	<p>The Estuary League of Friends – £37,184</p> <p>The Estuary League of Friends grant funded a volunteer coordinator to assist and help run more activities for vulnerable older people in the community to reduce isolation.</p>

FAQs

What support does the MCF offer to charities?

We offer project grants as well as unrestricted core grants, both of which can be offered for up to three years. We recognise the need for providing core funding to charities that want to continue delivering, developing or expanding their services, however, we are also keen to support those charities that demonstrate innovative thinking and have designed a pilot project based on a robust needs assessment.

Should my charity apply for a grant?

This document gives additional guidance and insight into our thinking, to help potential applicants understand our work better and decide whether our grant-making programmes are a good fit for them. Applicants can check their eligibility on our website with a simple checklist. We don't want to overburden charities with a complicated application process, so we offer a simplified one-stage process for small grant applications while large project grants applicants follow a two-stage process. Following a review of the first-stage application forms, successful charities

are asked to complete a second stage application form. In an attempt to help improve the experience of unsuccessful charities, we are committed to offering feedback on all applications.

How is the MCF funded?

Our work is funded solely through the generous donations of Freemasons under the United Grand Lodge of England, and their families and friends. Freemasons are encouraged to become actively involved with the charities we support because we believe that closer links will benefit both the masonic community and the charities; this may take the form of volunteering/trusteeships, further fundraising or raising awareness of a particular cause locally.

What does my charity need to showcase to be eligible for unrestricted core funding?

Whether applying for core or project funding, all applicant charities need to be able to showcase a need or demand for their services. It is also crucial that applicant charities are able to target those most in need of support.

Building better lives

60 Great Queen Street | London | WC2B 5AZ

Tel: 020 3146 3333 | info@mcf.org.uk

mcf.org.uk

July 2020

Charity number 1164703. Company number 09751836.