



Masonic
Charitable Foundation

Masonic Support Department – Complaints Policy and Process

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1. Overview

The Masonic Charitable Foundation's (MCF) aim is to provide an efficient and effective support service at all times. However, we understand that sometimes our beneficiaries and other parties may wish to raise issues about our service provision. We want to resolve matters quickly and to the satisfaction of the complainant. We welcome your complaints and comments, because your views about MCF are essential in helping us to continuously review and improve our services.

Should you have any questions not answered within this guidance document, please contact the Masonic Support department:

Thomas Hulme, Policy & Research Lead
Email: thulme@mcf.org.uk
Phone: 020 3146 3310

Please also note that complaints regarding services outside of those delivered by our support department are not covered or considered under this policy. For such complaints, again please contact Thomas Hulme for further guidance.

2. Complaints Policy

The Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) is committed to ensuring that all those that receive a grant (including any support services offer through our grants department) receive professional, courteous and timely support at all times. This includes those who apply to us for the first time or those that return for support having been previously considered for support in the past, whether successful or unsuccessful. All assessments of eligibility, masonic, financial or other, should be made irrespective of the outcome of any previous assessment and be assessed against current eligibility criteria.

Under this policy the MCF commits to deal with complaints as quickly as possible. The MCF will ensure that our process for reviewing and responding is fair, courteous and helpful. We will treat all complaints seriously, confidentially and in line with our equal opportunities policy. The MCF will ensure that all complainants are kept informed and we will also keep written records of all complaints.

The MCF recognises any expression of dissatisfaction as a potential complaint. If you are dissatisfied with the conduct of MCF employees or the grant support service you have received, please formally tell us. We will then follow our complaints processes outlined within the relevant sections of this guidance.

All complaints without exception will be kept fully confidential and will only involve those MCF staff members relevant to any review process. All complaints will be treated with respect and we expect that MCF staff involved in any complaint procedure will be provided the same courtesy.

2.1 Policy on Rights

By making a complaint you do not give up your right or access to receive future support from MCF, nor will any complaint submitted affect any future grants services you apply for from MCF.

2.2 Data Protection

By using our complaints procedure, you agree that we can use any personal information that you send us as part of your complaint for the purposes of reviewing and investigating your complaint. We may in certain circumstances, depending on the complaint, need to refer your personal information to other staff and or departments and we will ask for your permission if we do.

3. What is and is not considered a complaint

MCF defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of support service provided by MCF to a group and or individual. Most (but not all) **complaints will generally fall into one or more of the following categories:**

- About the way the MCF has provided grant support service(s).
- About staff interaction, attitude(s) or competency.
- That the MCF's decision on an application has not been clearly explained or justified.
- That key information within an application has been missed or misinterpreted.
- About the process that MCF has or has not followed to assess an application.
- That the Freemason connection has been incorrectly interpreted.
- That MCF has failed to give timely access to information or has given incorrect advice or information that has adversely affected submission of an application.
- That discrimination or unequal treatment has taken place.
- That an act of fraud has taken place by an individual in relation to an MCF grant.

The distinction between a formal complaint and informal feedback/complaints is decided based on how the information is provided. We do not consider enquiries about support services or initial requests for support, or information about MCF's grant policy as a complaint. We also do not consider social media commentary/feedback or open forum commentary as a complaint under this formal policy. Our general position is not to engage in discussion on an open forum to ensure we meet our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and due to internal staff confidentiality and privacy restrictions. However, social media and open forum feedback and complaints may be captured, and relevant parties invited to submit a formal direct complaint for review.

3.1 When a complaint can be made

A formal complaint can be submitted by those that wish to make a complaint regarding:

- The conduct of an MCF employee(s).
- The grant or support service you have received or feel you should have received.
- You feel that we have interpreted a significant part of the application incorrectly.
- You feel that we did not consider a relevant part of the application fully.

For complaints relating to an application for support, you must submit the complaint within 20 working days from the date of the decision email or letter. For all other complaints, there is no deadline, but you should be aware that it may be more difficult for us to resolve your complaint satisfactorily if you delay.

Please note that changes to grant levels that have been communicated in advance are outside of the scope of this complaints policy.

3.2 How the complaint should be made

A complaint should be made formally in writing or by email. Complaints should be addressed as follows:

Email – Gill Bennett, Grants Manager, gbennett@mcf.org.uk

Writing – For the attention of: Gill Bennett, Grant Manager, Masonic Charitable Foundation, 60 Great Queen Street, London. WC2B 5AZ.

When formally making a complaint, the key information we need is:

- The reference number.
- Which members of MCF staff you have dealt with.
- The reason for your complaint (see section 3.0).
- All new or additional information you feel has not been considered as part of your application.
- The outcome you are expecting.

Please note that to ensure your complaint is dealt with swiftly and in the most efficient manner, we ask that you do not copy anyone into your email. It will help us to deal with your complaint more efficiently if we deal solely with one person. If you do choose to copy anyone please note that we will not include them in our response.

3.3 Those who can submit a complaint

A complaint can be made by:

- The applicant.
- An immediate family member or carer acting on behalf of the applicant, with the applicant's knowledge and consent.
- The person acting as Visiting Volunteer, with the applicant's knowledge and consent.
- The Provincial or Metropolitan Grand Almoner, with the applicant's knowledge and consent.

4. Timeline and Expectations

4.1 How the complaint will be recorded

The relevant member of staff within the grants department that receives your formal complaint will record it within the internal complaints log and inform the Grants Manager.

Within three working days of receiving you're a complaint, we will confirm to you in writing that we have received and logged it. We will also provide contact details as to an MCF Masonic Support Department manager that will be dealing with your complaint and our timescale for when you can expect a reply.

4.2 How the complaint will be reviewed and monitored

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the service received, you should initially speak with the member of staff concerned. We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly via any relevantly linked staff member.

Complaints will be reviewed by the Grants Manager in liaison with the relevant members of staff.

4.3 Expected initial response and resolution times

We aim to resolve your complaint as soon as possible. Your complaint will be formally acknowledged within three working days of receipt. The Grants Manager, in line with any relevant Team Leader staff, will then investigate and send a written reply within ten working days.

If a complaint, once internally investigated and reviewed, indicates fault on behalf of MCF we will look to offer:

- An explanation and apology.
- A direct list of actions (with a timeline) in order to rectify the issue and reassure you that the issue has been dealt with and will not happen again.
- In no instances will financial compensation be considered.

If the complaint relates to a grant and we do not change our decision once it has been internally investigated and reviewed we will:

- Provide a clear reason for the decision we have made.
- Provide reassurance that procedure has been followed.
- Provide feedback to ensure that any future applications meet our criteria.

If the complaint about the grant outcome is upheld, then the grant application will be re-assessed by another member of the Grants team and a new decision will be made on the outcome of the application, considering any new information provided in the complaint. If the complaint is upheld and the application is re-assessed, this does not mean that an award will

be offered; the application will be re-considered in line with our eligibility criteria and any new information provided in the complaint.

4.4 If you are dissatisfied with the response

If you are not satisfied with the Grant Manager's response, a telephone call between both parties will be arranged as the next stage, to further review the case and discuss the reasons for disagreement.

If you feel your complaint is still not satisfactorily resolved, you will be invited to apply in writing to the Head of Masonic Support, for a further review. You will receive a reply from the Head of Masonic Support within 20 working days.

5. Public Whistleblowing Process and Procedure – Fraud and Misrepresentation Concerns

Sometimes members of the public or members of a Lodge under the United Grand Lodge of England may have concerns about an individual that has received support from MCF. This may be in relation to potentially fraudulent activity, misrepresentation or misuse of grant funds.

You can submit a complaint or whistleblowing enquiry if you reasonably believe that:

- An individual has misrepresented their household and/or family circumstance in an attempt to receive, or successfully have received, charitable support.
- An individual that is currently in receipt of support or applying for support is currently engaged in potentially fraudulent activity(s).
- An individual that is currently in receipt of support has breached their grant agreement and has not disclosed information that will have a material impact on the support we offer.
- A Freemason linked to the award of financial support is believed to have been expelled from the Craft.

Please note that all complaints or whistleblowing in regard to potential breaches of grant agreements or eligibility criteria will be dealt with under the **protection of anonymity** of those submitting concerns.

All whistleblowing concerns will be investigated to the best of our ability given any information provided. However, for the MCF to investigate any whistleblowing concern we will require evidence to support any claim.



For Freemasons, for families, for everyone

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