



Almoners Newsletter

Suffolk Provincial Grand Lodge

Newsletter July 2020
Volume 2020, Issue 1

PGA Pointers

Welcome to this first edition of the Almoners Newsletter. I hope that you enjoy the content and learn a little more about the role of Lodge Almoner.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our lives possibly forever. The Government relaxed the lockdown on 5th July, however there is no doubt that we have a long way to go before we can return to the "new" normal.

The introduction of the Job Retention Scheme supported many businesses and their workforce throughout the lockdown, but this is set to finish at the end of October. This will undoubtedly add to the vulnerability of some

Brethren who are starting out on their career paths.

The Lockdown has also been challenging for some of our senior members as they care for their loved ones. Regular support services have been withdrawn and many have been left "home alone" in some testing situations.

In both instances, the Suffolk Provincial Almoner Team is here to help. No brother or their families should suffer in silence. They should be encouraged to seek support. Our team in Suffolk is here to help.



W. Bro Jamie Gwatkin
Provincial Grand Almoner

Inside this issue:

PGA Pointers

MCF News

State Support

Support
Reference
material

Wellbeing

How to get help

Ask the AST

Team Contacts



MCF News Update

MCF reports no changes in working practices. Staff continue to work remotely.

Website - new look:
<https://mcf.org.uk/>

Grant Areas -
Financial Assistance - no change

Health - Medical grants remain suspended except urgent cardiac, cancer or ophthalmic help.

Standard items of mobility aids are available where an OT assessment is not required.

Family - no change.

Processing workload is heavy due to case reviews. New application timescale is 8 weeks. Priority cases are being processed in 1 - 2 weeks.

New enquiries should use telephone or email address

Visiting Volunteers may be re-engaged to do telephone interviews on a voluntary basis

Special points of interest

Medical Grants suspended except urgent help

Processing timescale - 8 weeks

Visiting Volunteers may be re-engaged to do telephone interviews

State Support

As an Almoner, it is useful to have a basic understanding of the various State Benefits and NHS Services that members may be eligible for. Applicants may not be offered certain types of support

from the MCF unless they are claiming the relevant State benefits in the first instance. State benefits and care options can be confusing. The Advice and Support Team at

MCF can offer expert guidance. You can see if an applicant is missing out on State help by using “Entitled to’s” online benefits calculator - see below.

State Support Reference material

The Resources section within new MCF website is the place to start:
<https://www.mcf.org.uk>

The Almoner fact sheet “Guide to Government

benefits” is also available at:
<https://mcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Guide-to-government-benefits.pdf>

The following online calculator identifies if an applicant missing out:
<http://www.entitledto.co.uk/>
The Almoners Handbook is also available on the PGL Hub

“It’s good to talk.....

ring the MCF enquiries line on 0800 035 60 90”

Wellbeing Counselling

Counselling is a type of talking therapy that allows applicants to discuss their thoughts, feeling and behaviour with a trained professional. Counselling can help recipients manage and

cope with a variety of issues such as

- Bereavement or redundancy
- Relationship problems
- Depression and anxiety

- Traumatic or upsetting experiences
- Difficult emotions such as sadness, anger, or low self-esteem.

How to get help

MCF can provide access to a confidential counselling service through a 24-hour phone line for freemasons, their married, life, widowed, divorced, or separated partners, as well as their children

and grandchildren between the ages of 17-25 in full time education.

The service can be accessed without referral from a GP. All discussions will be totally confidential.

To access the service first contact the enquiries team on:

Tel: 0800 035 60 90

Email: help@mcf.org.uk



The Suffolk Almoner Support Team is made up of 13 dedicated individuals who are located around the Province. The aim of the team is to provide help and support to Lodge Almoners and assist with delivering help to the Brethren of Suffolk, their families, and dependants during times of need. The service will include increasing awareness, providing knowledge & support, and giving practical help when applicants want to secure grants and support from the MCF or elsewhere

Ask the Advice & Support Team - Caroline Wales...

Q: I've recently lost my job. I'm struggling financially what can the MCF do to help?

A: The MCF is able to give emergency payments when the AST adviser receives a commission for financial distress and identifies the beneficiary is in immediate hardship ie using local food banks, less than £250 in the bank and little/no income. The request for an emergency payment would

be made by the AST adviser and escalated to the Team Leader. Emergency payments can only be considered when a new application is made for DLE and the AST report and relevant supporting documents have been uploaded.



SUFFOLK ALMONER SUPPORT TEAM – please call us

W. Bro Jamie Gwatkin (PGA)	01284 386111 (H)	07976 736393 (M)
W. Bro Terry Lewis (DPGA)	01359 258770 (H)	07830 111680 (M)
W. Bro Mike Smith (Group 1)	01502 800412 (H)	07754 869193 (M)
W. Bro Paul Durrant (Group 2)	01502 568947 (H)	07770 594623 (M)
W. Bro Ian McFetridge (Group 3)	01638 712817 (H)	
W. Bro David Cattermole (Group 4)	01379 783583 (H)	07775 908981 (M)
W. Bro John McMahon (Group 5)	01206 855971 (H)	07904 237616 (M)
W. Bro Jon Neill (Group 6)	01206 213016 (H)	07771 933454 (M)
W. Bro David Hepburn (Group 7)	01502 563215 (H)	07947 805851 (M)
W. Bro Kenny Hope (Group 8)	01394 273634 (H)	
W. Bro Melvyn Eke (Group 9)	01473 602846 (H)	07764 241321 (M)
W. Bro Dougie Paine (VV)	01473 912449 (H)	07947 355893 (M)
Caroline Wales (AST)		07802 797239 (M)

