



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SUFFOLK

Office: Freemasons Hall, Soane Street, Ipswich IP4 2BG – Tel. (01473) 232432

Website: www.suffolkpgl.org.uk Email: pgl@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

Provincial Grand Almoner – Jamie Gwatkin

Bradwell, The Street, Bradfield Combust, Bury St Edmunds IP30 0LP

Tel: 01284 386111 (H) 07976 736393 (M) Email: almoner@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

28th September 2020

To all Lodge Almoners

Brethren All

Almoner's Role & Report Guidance Update – September 2020

Following the resumption of Masonic activities in July 2020, I have been asked by my Group Almoners to update the reporting guidance for Lodge Almoners. This is set out below and has been checked to ensure it complies with the GDPR Policy for Suffolk Provincial Grand Lodge. The main areas are:

1. Contact made between Lodge Meetings.

The Proactive Almoner will try to contact lodge members between meetings (by phone, email, visit or letter), particularly those whom the Lodge has not seen for some time or those known to have ongoing health or welfare problems.

The Almoner will ask the member, widow, or dependant if they give their permission to be mentioned in the report and specifically if they are happy for their contact details and personal circumstances to be mentioned in the report. If consent is not given, no details can be reported.

2. Health and Welfare issues.

Information about health and welfare of a member should be kept to a minimum **and no details given without consent of the person concerned.**

Brethren need to know if a Brother who is suffering from ill-health wishes to be contacted or visited. Avoid giving a prognosis unless specifically asked to do so. A brother who is struggling to recover will not wish to read of his imminent demise.

If contact is requested, make it clear how this is to be accomplished. If it is to be through a third-party or family member the Brethren will need contact details. Similarly, if there are certain times for hospital visits, ward information or ward telephone numbers, provide these to the Brethren. **All visiting must comply with Government / hospital COVID guidelines**

3. Visits

The Almoner may have visited a Brother/bereaved family member and wish to report this. Often it is necessary to ask Brethren to help with on-going visits or to co-ordinate visits so that the Brother or his family are not overwhelmed with kindness. A Brother may need help with shopping, transport to hospital, transport to Lodge meetings, gardening etc. The Almoner should co-ordinate rotas and teamwork and stress that he cannot do everything on his own. The report should leave no doubt about what is needed to care for a member/dependant. **A risk assessment should be completed before any tasks are undertaken and all assistance should comply with Government COVID guidelines.**

4. Widows and Dependants

The Almoner should report his contact with lodge widows, and details of gifts, flowers, or help which may have been given on behalf of the Lodge.

The Almoner should inform the Brethren of events to support widows, e.g. dinners, parties, socials and whether help is needed with such things as lifts, hosting, company etc. **These are suspended at present.**

5. Training

The Brethren will expect their Almoner to be well-informed on pastoral matters, good practice, and specific items of charitable and welfare support. The report should contain information about conferences, group meetings, seminars, and information which the Almoner has received. The report should stress that the Almoner is not the expert but is able to signpost where help may be found. Videos, leaflets, and general information is available on the MCF and Provincial websites and these are regularly updated. A good report will highlight some of these where necessary.

6. Useful Information, leaflets, pamphlets etc.

The Almoner should have useful information materials for circulation to the Brethren. Much is available which can be downloaded, and it is helpful to inform Brethren in the report where to search. A sort list might include website addresses. For example:

Cornwallis Court application forms: www.rmbi.org.uk/cornwallis-court-suffolk

MCF leaflets/guides: mcf.org.uk/almoners

Local Charities which offer support: turn2us.org.uk

If you have resources to distribute, the report should tell the Brethren how to get them. E.g. MCF Christmas Cards.

7. Inclusion of the Almoner's Report in Lodge Minutes

The Almoner's report should be written by the Lodge Almoner. Anything printed in the minutes should not be the Secretary's summary of what was said. In these times of data protection, it is important that no almoner says anything verbally or in writing which may leave him open to legal challenge. Finish your written report as follows:

"This report is the sole report of (your name) almoner of Lodge(your Lodge number). Information about any brother or family member written herein has been shown to the named brother and his consent to publication has been obtained."

I hope that this clarifies the current position and allows you to do your role more effectively. Keep healthy and stay safe.

Yours sincerely & fraternally

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jamie', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

W. Bro Jamie Gwatkin
Provincial Grand Almoner