

**Provincial Grand Almoner  
Report for Provincial Grand Lodge**

**The office of Almoner is an integral member of our Masonic Lodges and he is there to support all the members and their families who are of paramount importance, ensuring that no cry for help goes unheeded.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our lives possibly forever. The Government relaxed the lock down rules in July, however there is no doubt that we have a long way to go before we can return to the “new” normal and the lock down was challenging time for some members and their families in our Province as they cared for their loved ones.

Therefore there has never been a more important time to embrace the office of Lodge Almoner and two of our cores principles, those of Brotherly Love and Charity by maintaining regular contact with each other, especially those who are elderly, alone, infirm or those who are still shielding or self-isolating. It reminds them that they are not on their own and it will help us all as we return to our Lodges united by a stronger bond.

Since March 2020, a day has not gone by where a Lodge, Chapter Almoner or members themselves have contacted either me or the ELMC for some support. This situation still continues as I write this report. I am regularly in contact, on a daily basis, with the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), who have been working extremely hard on your behalf.

**How do the MCF Enquiries Team support vulnerable people through the process of assessing potential for support**

The Enquiries Team are able to gauge a person’s circumstances by having a conversation and asking pertinent questions to establish their situation. Should it be established that they are vulnerable or a potential safeguarding case, this will be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the MCF and managed according to the MCF’s safeguarding policy.

**Last year the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) awarded over 5,000 Grants to Brethren and their families as follows:**

- An additional £1M was spent on Daily Living Cost grants
- One-off Emergency Daily Living Cost grants increased 100% to c.£100k
- Grants for rent and mortgage arrears more than doubled
- Counselling Carline grants increased by 20%, to over 550 for the year
- An additional 200 laptops and tablets provided to beneficiaries to help with home schooling and socialising during lockdown
- Nearly 3,000 Area Support team visits and over 1,000 Visiting Volunteers (Provincial Welfare Officers), mostly by virtual meetings were made
- Medical grants raised fast after fully reopening in December 2020

## **Overview of the Support from Masonic Charitable Foundation for East Lancashire - 2020**

**132 Freemasons** and their family members have been helped with grants, totalling **£384,582**

This is broken down as follows:

- £241,063 to help with daily living costs
- £60,535 to support health care and well being
- £82,984 to support education of children and young people
- Additionally £46,578 in grants given to local charities
- Six members of the Province accessed the MCF counselling support service

I continue to be touched by some of the stories of Districts and their Brethren from across the whole Province who have demonstrated support for each other and extended this to the wider community and long may this continue.

The Metropolitan & Provincial Grand Almoners continue to hold monthly Zoom meetings with the Masonic Charitable Foundation, where we have been able, on your behalf, to raise not only your concerns but also our own.

I continued to hold regular Zoom meetings with our Provincial Welfare Officers and I am grateful to them for their support not only to myself but also the members and their families across our Province.

During the last year we had the sad passing of WBro Charles Ward who carried out his role as a Welfare Officer with great commitment. I am also grateful for the support in their roles as Welfare Officers of Worshipful Brothers Brian Wilbraham and Dennis Heskett, who retired from their roles during the year having served in since 2016.

I continue to attend meetings of the ELMC Board, Grants Making Committee and Committee of Benevolence. Their work has not diminished during the pandemic!

I conclude this Report with the usual request - if you hear of anyone who is ill or in need of assistance, please contact your Lodge Almoner or myself without delay. We are here to help.

David Hudson  
**Provincial Grand Almoner**  
**November 2021**