



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

W. Bro. Neil Morse PGStB
Provincial Grand Almoner

Dear Brethren,

Over the past year or so the consolidation of the 4 National Masonic Charities, into the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), has been progressing with many new Operating Practices.

One key change is the introduction of a new process for the completion and submission to the MCF of any application for Financial, Health or Child Support. Whereas in recent years we in Hampshire and Isle of Wight have trained and 'deployed' Visiting Brothers from Lodges and Areas to undertake this activity, under the new process, only MCF trained, vetted and accredited Visiting Volunteers (VVs) will be permitted to submit applications on behalf of potential clients. These VVs will undergo two full days of training by the MCF, something far deeper and more encompassing than we could have undertaken within the Province.

With Area Almoners across the Province, we have identified 16 potential VVs who have applied to undertake the role and the first 13 of these candidates have completed their training and have been accepted by the MCF. The Visiting Volunteer scheme will therefore go live on 31st July 2017.

The introduction of the VV scheme also impacts the role of our Lodge Almoners (LAs), their duties to become focussed on the pastoral care of their members and families. The main changes can be summarised as follows:

- The LA will still meet with Lodge members and look after the relationship with them. If they perceive a requirement for MCF help, they can instigate the process through their Area Almoners and Provincial Grand Almoner, rather than undertake the application process themselves.
- LAs will be welcome to continue submitting applications to the Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Masonic Charitable Trust, or MCT, (previously the Hubert Giles Masonic Benevolent Trust and the Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight General Charitable Trust) to provide help to their Lodge members and family. LAs will also be engaged in the annual applications to the Provincial Comforts Fund from their Lodge, and also to input to Provincial schemes such as the Bournemouth Holidays.
- Under the previous RMTGB, where we had a family in receipt of support from the MCF, the Province allocated a Case Almoner to be the focal point for the family and the MCF. Under the new MCF, the role of Case Almoner will cease. To maintain continuity, we are requesting that on initial visits, VVs discuss the relationship with the Case Almoner and/or Visiting Brother and engage with the family to ensure a smooth transition.

Overall, these changes will not impact every Lodge or Lodge Almoner, many of whom are already undertaking the primary pastoral care role only. The role will be introduced on a rolling basis, with the VV stepping in for new applications or when the renewal process is triggered.

For those Brethren who have been undertaking the role of a Visiting Brother or Case Almoner, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your time and commitment to this most important aspect of Freemasonry.

N. Morse Provincial Grand Almoner

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