

For the aid and assistant of PCO's and Group Almoners of the Province of Yorkshire West Riding

Contents

Eligibility	1
Information required by the Provincial Almoner	2
What care can be provided	2
Medical Treatment	3
Assessment of Neurodivergent conditions	3
Mental Health Counselling	4
Payment of Lodge subscriptions	4
Hearing Aids	4
Stair lifts	4
WRMCL (West Riding Masonic Charities Ltd)	4
Reimbursements	5
Travelling emergencies	6
Details of Connaught Court.	6

Eligibility:

The first question which you should ask when approached by a would be claimant is. Are they eligible for support? This splits into two elements.

Qualification:

To be eligible for support from either Masonic Charity we routinely deal with, a petitioner must have a direct connection to a subscribing Freemason. Generally the connection goes down the generations, Children and Grandchildren, NOT UPWARDS to parents and

grandparents, and laterally only by marriage(including divorced or separated ex-wives). The sister of a Mason will not qualify from her brothers membership and neither will his parents.

Going down the generations, the children, adopted and step children of a Freemason will qualify for assistance BUT only until they are 18 years of age unless in full time education. This will cease when they leave full time education or are 25 years old.

Grandchildren, including adopted and step Grandchildren will also qualify for assistance under the same age restrictions.

Please see the full reference at the end of this document. Appendix 1.

Means:

Although there are some benefits which are not means tested the bulk of grants and other assistances will be subject to a review to ensure that there is a NEED and not just a want. There is a general rule that owning more than one property debars applicants from help, and the MCF have a capital limit of £23,500.00 to receive assistance, anyone with more than this figure, including equity in property will not receive assistance. WRMCL usually use the same rules as MCF in assessing eligibility.

Cause:

Finally there must be a trigger that caused the the need to arise, and this trigger cannot predate the Brothers initiation date . Low Income alone is not sufficient to obtain help, there must have been a change in circumstances resulting in this fall of income.

Information required by Provincial Almoner.

When approaching the Provincial Almoner or the PCO's for assistance, please ensure you have the following information available.

Name of the applicant, Lodge Name and number. Contact Address and telephone and email address if he has one and the year that he joined Freemasonry.

Name and details of the beneficiary to any grant including relationship, age and address.

Details of exactly what help and assistance is needed.

What care can be provided:

Although this is a question that comes up on a regular basis, it is one without a proper answer. When something goes wrong, the function of the Almoner's office is not to provide care, nor to second guess the requirements of the person affected.

As almoners we facilitate help, act as signposts to sources of help and guide those who need help to the financial help they need.

We do not provide nursing services , transport, baby sitting or doggy daycare.

As an almoner, PCO or Group Almoner you must find out from the applicant what help they are looking for and the approach the office through the Confidential Helpline – 0344 902 0220 or email helpline@wrprovince.com.

Medical Treatment, from 1 January 2025:

For medical conditions applicants must have a GP referral to an NHS consultant. This can be gained easily by speaking to the surgery in question for a copy.

A grant for a medical consultation can be provided if the waiting list for an NHS consultation **exceeds 12 weeks**. (they expect applicants to check the waiting time using the GP Electronic Booking Service, but they won't ask for written evidence from their GP).

Applicants must be on an NHS waiting list for treatment. A grant for private medical treatment can be provided if the NHS waiting time **exceeds 18 weeks**. Their chosen consultant must also work for the NHS.

Grants will only be considered for NICE approved treatments which are provided by the NHS.

In addition, the MCF has made minor changes to focus their package of support on the core needs of their beneficiaries. This means that the following treatments will now be excluded:

- Bariatric surgery
- IVF
- Limb prostheses
- Cosmetic surgery (reconstructive surgery will continue to be considered)
- Pain relief (unless acute and by exception)

Assessment of Neurodivergent conditions.

The availability of assessment of children who have neurodiverse conditions such as ADHD and Dyslexia has suffered due to problems within the NHS and consequently increasing wait times – up to 3 years – have been reported to the Almoners' Office by applicants seeking assistance.

Help is available through the MCF, and the brother should be advised to contact the MCF through the enquiry line 0800 035 6090 to request assistance. This comes in the form of a grant to allow a private consultation, but it is up to the applicant to identify the practitioner he wishes to use before making the application.

Mental Health Counselling.

There are two counselling services available through the MCF:

Adult Counselling.

Counselling for young persons.

An initial course of Counselling is available without means testing, although if this is extended means test will be required to fund additional sessions.

These are not usually required, and the service has anecdotally proved efficient and popular. Access is through the MCF enquiry line 0800 035 6090.

Payment of Lodge Subscriptions.

There is a general rule that lodges may not pay subscriptions for members, which is to prevent continuous payments year after year.

If a brother, through no fault of his own – such as illness / accident or business failure caused by something outside of the brothers control, it is open to the almoner to pay one year's subscription to allow the brother concerned a breathing space until he can get back to normal and make a rational decision regarding his masonic future.

Hearing Aids:

Neither MCF nor WRMCL fund hearing aids, as the NHS provided aids are considered technically excellent.

Stair Lifts:

Stair lifts can be provided by referral to the MCF (priority given if there is a risk of a fall), or sometimes through Mark Masons if the brother is a member.

WRMCL (West Riding Masonic Care Charity)

The West Riding Masonic Care and Support Fund was launched in 2023 and replaced CHOICES which has, to date assisted over 950 of our members or their dependants, in times of need. The Team consists of two Care and Support Officers, Sharon Mees, Elaine Dunwell, our Welfare Officer, Claire Beaumont, and two Administrators: supported by the Craft Provincial Almoner, Royal Arch Provincial Almoner, and the Mark Masons Provincial Almoner.

Help from the Care & Support Fund is available to:

All Freemasons who are members of the Province of Yorkshire, West Riding

Their wives, partners and widows.

Family and other dependants of West Riding Freemasons. (Please see notes in eligibility on pages 1 and 2)

Aim of the Care & Support Fund

The aim of the West Riding Care and Support fund is to identify and assist in providing any need before it becomes a necessity to distressed and vulnerable West Riding Freemasons, and/or his family and dependants.

The Care and Support team can provide fast and immediate assistance and support whenever a West Riding Freemason, his family or dependants are:

- In financial distress
- Have any urgent need.
- Have any other immediate or pressing requirement.

Examples of need and the services the Care and Support fund provide vary tremendously and here are just a few examples:

- Emergency financial grant.
- Home improvements, minor repairs or house access problems.
- Assisting with short term respite and convalescent care.
- Help with health and social care needs.

Help with benefit checks and assessment.

Reimbursements:

With very few exceptions, neither MCF nor WRMCL will reimburse payments already made, and if assistance is required, this must be sought before purchasing goods or entering contracts.

Paying for emergency healthcare for serious conditions MAY be considered but not guaranteed.

Travel Emergencies:

If an emergency occurs whilst on holiday, this should be covered by travel insurance, and no assistance is available to those who fail to take out adequate insurance, or whose insurance is invalidated.

Connaught Court and Respite Care.

There is an idea within the province that Connaught Court will take any Freemason who wants to move in. this is not the case. Although Connaught Court is an RMBI home, it operates just as other homes do, albeit to a much higher standard than a lot of others.

Consequently, if you have a brother or wife who wishes to stay temporarily or permanently at Connaught Court, they must be aware that before booking they must be in a position to pay for their stay which, depending on the level of care required, can cost as much as £2,057 per week, (as of 20th April 2025).

For permanent residence the applicant must show they have the resources to meet two years fees before they will be accepted.

Availability at Connaught Court, particularly in respect of care, cannot be guaranteed as occupation levels change from day to day and there is a waiting list for availability.

Consequently, if you are approached on this topic, you should refer the Brother to Connaught Court Admissions on 01904 626238.

Another point to consider before approaching Connaught Court is whether Connaught Court is the best option. Their care is second to none but from the outer reaches of the province, visiting involves a long round trip.

Also moving to York involves the loss of local support and the friends and acquaintances the new resident has been used to meeting.

Often there are very good homes offering similar levels of care much nearer than York and this must be a consideration in deciding where care will be sought.

Additional help and information

UGLE Almoners Guide	b.ugle.org.uk
UGLE Data Protection Guide	b.ugle.org.uk
MCF Almoner Leaflets	MCF.org.uk
MCF Almoner Videos	MCF.org.uk

Appendix 1.

The beneficiary must be one of the following:

- UGLE Freemason
- Wife/partner of UGLE Freemason
- Widow/widowed partner of UGLE Freemason who is not married to/cohabiting with a new partner
- Divorced or separated partner of UGLE Freemason who is not married to/cohabiting with a new partner
- **Child** of UGLE Freemason in full time education up to and including the age of 25
- Grandchild of UGLE Freemason in full time education up to and including the age of 25. If the Freemason was initiated or re-joined after the child was born this must have been before the qualifying change of circumstances occurred.
- **Child** or grandchild of a UGLE Freemason, who is not able to undertake or maintain education or paid employment, due to disability and/or care needs. No age restriction.
- Other relation **physically or financially supported** by a UGLE Freemason