



**Masonic**  
Charitable Foundation



Impact Report 2023/24

# Support where it is needed most

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ANDY

CASE STUDY

## Support that transforms lives

Andy, from Sussex, has lived with Cystic Fibrosis all his life. After losing his full-time job due to health challenges, he faced financial hardship, only managing part-time work in a new industry. When he struggled to secure a deposit for a flat, his father suggested seeking help from his Masonic Lodge. They provided immediate assistance, but encouraged him to contact the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF, the Freemasons' charity) for further support.

Andy needed a special diet to manage his condition, but his limited state benefits of £7 per day made it difficult to afford nutritious food, leading to frequent hospital visits and mental strain. With guidance from a Visiting Volunteer, Andy applied for more state benefits and an MCF Daily Living Cost grant. This financial support improved his diet, reduced hospital stays, and improved his mental well-being.

**The help I receive from the MCF is fundamental to my physical and mental health. I'm extremely grateful to be receiving this support and it has allowed me to live with dignity."**



# Welcome and introduction

**James M Long, TD**  
President and Chairman



**We have witnessed the enduring impact of our ongoing programmes and a significant evolution in how we address changing societal needs.”**

It is a pleasure to present the 2023/24 Impact Report of the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF, the Freemasons’ charity), an organisation whose charitable work continues to build better lives and provide life-changing support to individuals and communities across England, Wales, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and overseas Districts. This year, we have witnessed both the enduring impact of our ongoing programmes and a significant evolution in how we address changing societal needs, in particular the growing demand for mental health support.

Throughout 2023/24, we continued to deliver support to local and national charities, awarding £5.7 million to organisations that together helped an estimated 379,000 people. These grants have enabled charities to maintain and even expand their services amidst rising demand, ensuring that those most in need receive essential care and support. Our focus areas this year – creating the best start in life for children and reducing isolation for people in later life – reflect a commitment to addressing some of the most critical challenges facing society today.

Our grants to support charities supplement the direct support we awarded to over 3,000 individuals and their families through more than 4,500 grants. This assistance, totalling £13.7 million this year, has been invaluable for those facing financial hardship, health challenges, and barriers to educational opportunities.

Our success is due in no small part to the extraordinary generosity of Freemasons and their families. Through their unwavering support, we raised £18.9 million this year through donations, legacies and fundraising, with the Provinces of Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire all concluding Festival Appeals during the year. Freemasonry’s dedication to service and charity, cornerstones of our fraternity, ensures that the MCF can continue to make a lasting difference in the lives of so many.

As we reflect on the year, I would like to thank our Trustees, staff, and volunteers for their tireless efforts in delivering our charitable activities. Their commitment, combined with the continued support of Freemasons, positions us strongly to face the challenges ahead.

# Our year in brief

In 2023/24 we awarded grants totalling

## £26.3 million

**Support for individuals and households**

### £13.7M

awarded to **3,036** individuals through **4,575** grants

**Residential care**

### £6.9M

to support RMBI Care Co. residents with the cost of their care

**Support for charities and communities**

### £5.7M

awarded to **339** local and national charities, helping over **379,000** people

**Of which...**

### £8.2M

awarded for essential daily living costs

### £4.4M

awarded for health, care and wellbeing

### £1.1M

awarded for help with young people in education

## In addition...

We provided advice, information and support services, including:



### 1,061

visits to applicants were completed by our **286** trained Visiting Volunteers.



### 17,815

interactions between our enquiries team and the people we support.

# Supporting charities and communities

In 2023/24, we awarded  
**339 grants**  
to charities totalling

**£5.7 million** on behalf of Freemasonry

## Sustaining services and expanding reach

Our grants have enabled charities to continue providing vital services, despite the challenges of rising demand. In 2023/24:

- **80%** of charities reported that MCF funding helped them to maintain their existing services.
- **72%** stated that the funding enabled them to reach even more people in need.

This sustained support has been particularly valuable in ensuring the longevity and stability of core services. Many charities emphasised the positive impact of multi-year projects, which has allowed them to plan strategically for the long term and raise additional funding.

### Grant programmes

- **£3.4M**  
Early Years - Children and Families
- **£1.2M**  
Isolation in Later Life
- **£600K**  
Hospice UK
- **£460K**  
Locally chosen charities
- **£80K**  
Disaster Relief

## What the charities we support think about working with us

Each year we survey charities that received small and large grants. This year, the feedback highlighted the ease of the application process and the responsiveness of MCF staff.



**94%**

of charities found the information needed to apply for a grant was 'very easy' or 'easy' to locate on our website.



**98%**

of charities either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the MCF's Charity Grants staff were knowledgeable and responsive.



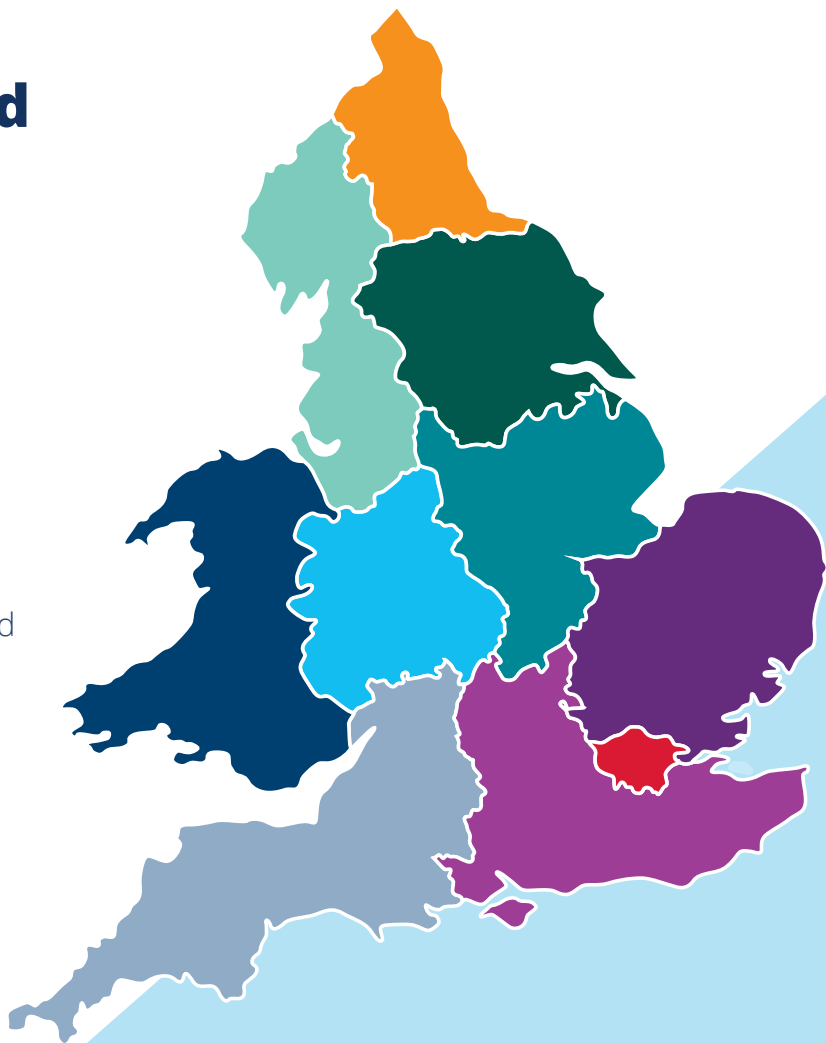
**99%**

of charities rated their overall experience of applying for MCF funding as 'very positive' or 'positive'.

## Grants awarded to charities in England and Wales\*

- |                                    |                                               |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ■ North East<br><b>£251,420</b>    | ■ Yorkshire and the Humber<br><b>£412,435</b> |
| ■ North West<br><b>£754,824</b>    | ■ East Midlands<br><b>£640,757</b>            |
| ■ West Midlands<br><b>£342,464</b> | ■ East of England<br><b>£520,508</b>          |
| ■ Wales<br><b>£111,744</b>         | ■ London<br><b>£576,806</b>                   |
| ■ South West<br><b>£641,175</b>    | ■ South East<br><b>£831,981</b>               |

\*excluding Hospice UK partnership and disaster relief



# Creating the best start in life for disadvantaged children and reducing isolation for people in later life

In 2023/24, we concluded a multiyear programme of supporting vulnerable groups through two priority themes: creating the best start in life for disadvantaged children and young people and reducing isolation for those in later life. These themes were central to the impact we achieved through our grants. In total, we estimate, over **379,000** people benefited from a diverse range of grants. Notably, small grant recipients saw an average **20%** increase in the number of beneficiaries they supported.



## Focus areas and new priorities

As the year concluded we redefined our funding priorities in order to better respond to particular societal issues that resonate with our donors, and demonstrate more effectively the impact of our funding. These new priorities are:

- Early Years (children aged 0–5), with a focus on the extremes of poverty and neglect;
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- Children affected by domestic abuse; and
- People living with dementia and their carers.

These new themes will become a core part of our reporting in the next year, ensuring that we continue to target the most vulnerable groups.

## Services supported

The wide range of MCF-supported initiatives was key to the impact we created. The charities receiving funding through our two priority themes were able to deliver services across the numerous areas shown in this chart.



## Children and young people: key impact areas

One of the key focus areas of our funding is improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people. According to feedback from charities, the three most significant areas of impact were:

- Improved mental health for **35%** of young beneficiaries;
- Increased social opportunities for another **35%**; and
- Enhanced educational outcomes for **30%**.

One notable example comes from the Rising Sun Domestic Violence Abuse Service, which provided counselling to **86** children affected by domestic abuse. This service exceeded its initial targets, with **79%** of children showing a positive mental health outcome, demonstrating the profound difference that our funding makes.



## Reducing isolation and supporting older people in later life

In 2023/24, we continued to make a significant impact in addressing social isolation among older adults. The MCF's funding supported a wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing social connections, improving physical health, and fostering community engagement. These programmes have been instrumental in reducing loneliness and promoting overall wellbeing among an estimated **8,807** older people.



### Later life: key impact areas

The top three impact areas for older people identified in feedback from funded charities were:

- Increased social connections: **40%**
- Physical health improvements: **35%**
- Community engagement: **25%**

Search (Services for Older People) a charity working to reduce isolation, commented on the value of social connections built through MCF-funded programmes. **89%** of people attending lunch clubs reported feeling better as a result of their participation, demonstrating the emotional and social benefits of these opportunities. As one beneficiary noted, "The success for us has been the friendships which people have formed as a result of coming together in these clubs".



## Supporting those most in need in times of crisis

In response to the devastating Morocco earthquake in September 2023, the MCF's disaster relief programme gave a **£10,000** grant to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent to deliver life-saving aid to affected communities. The 6.8-magnitude earthquake claimed nearly 3,000 lives, injured thousands more, and destroyed homes, schools and infrastructure.

- The programme helped provide first aid to **50,000** people immediately after the earthquake.
- Ongoing support includes the installation of **138** water points, **133** toilets, and **107** showers, ensuring access to basic necessities for survivors.

### NEZHA'S STORY

#### CASE STUDY

## Human impact

One remarkable story from the relief effort involves Nezha, who gave birth in a Red Cross health tent just days after the Morocco earthquake. She named her baby Anas after one of the nurses who assisted in the delivery. This heartwarming example illustrates the profound human impact of the relief efforts, which the MCF's support made possible.



Photo courtesy of the Red Cross.



“  
The process of meeting  
via video call ahead  
of submitting a full  
application was really  
useful in understanding  
the foundation and your  
application process,  
and to gain an insight  
into what you were  
interested  
in supporting.”

“  
The charities  
we support  
told us...”

“  
I found the application process  
easy to navigate and the  
application questions were well  
structured and meaningful.”

## BRIGHT SHADOW

### CASE STUDY

## Fighting dementia with creativity

Studies show that engaging the brain's creative side can help people with dementia express themselves better. Bright Shadow harnesses art and music to support those diagnosed with dementia, helping them thrive. With a **£10,000** donation last year, Bright Shadow expanded its Zest Communities programme, offering weekly creative sessions like dance, music, and circus activities led by experts.

Bright Shadow believes that creativity helps alleviate dementia symptoms, especially isolation. Zest sessions bring participants together, allowing them to connect beyond the roles of care giver and care recipient. Feedback reveals that **90%** of participants feel positive and engaged after these sessions.

Varied activities, such as a five-week art project led by visual artist Becky, enhance wellbeing. Participants created colourful flags expressing feelings like “joyful” and “welcoming.” Other sessions took place in community gardens, where participants explored nature-based art and poetry with six different artists. Over three months, happiness levels soared, with **100%** of attendees reporting they felt “good” or “great” after sessions, compared to **42%** previously.



# Strategic partnerships

## Supporting children, families, and the charity sector

We continued to support transformative projects in 2023/24 through significant strategic partnerships. The focus was on creating lasting impact for vulnerable children and families, through Home-Start's *Big Hopes, Big Future* programme and strengthening the charity sector through our Cranfield Trust partnership.



### Home-Start: Big Hopes, Big Future £1 million over five years

Through this partnership, the MCF expanded Home-Start's *Big Hopes, Big Future* programme to support families with young children facing serious challenges. The programme, concluding in 2024/25, aims to improve children's readiness for school by fostering positive home learning environments for children aged 18 months to five years.

- **1,100** children were supported throughout the partnership.
- The programme focused on critical skills development in areas such as language, cognitive abilities, daily living skills, and behavioural improvement, ensuring that children were better equipped to engage with nursery and school life.

### Home-Start: Big Hopes, Big Future

#### CASE STUDY

A single mother with twin boys, aged three, struggled with their speech delays and behavioural issues. Isolated due to the pandemic and having escaped domestic abuse, she felt overwhelmed. With the support of a Home-Start volunteer, the boys improved their speech, behaviour, and social skills, preparing them for nursery. Their mother gained confidence in managing their behaviour and helping them thrive in a learning environment.

This case exemplifies the transformative impact of the BHBF programme, not only on the children's school readiness but also on their family's overall wellbeing.

### Cranfield Trust: strengthening charitable organisations

£228,000 over two years

In addition to supporting children and families, the MCF also partnered with the Cranfield Trust to strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized charities. Supported by a £228,000 grant, this two-year partnership provided pro-bono consultancy and mentoring, helping frontline charities enhance their operations and sustainability.

- **71** consultancy and mentoring projects were delivered, supporting **61** charities, exceeding the initial target.
- The programme included **60** consultancy assignments and **11** mentoring initiatives, providing in-depth strategic and operational support to charities.
- **3,400** delegates participated in **22** webinars aimed at improving charity management and operations.

- **20** peer-to-peer groups were facilitated, involving **117** charity participants.

- A comprehensive research study was conducted to explore the management training needs of small charities, with the findings published in December 2023.

This partnership focused on leadership development and strategic planning, addressing financial challenges and helping charities become more sustainable. Many of the supported charities were local organisations with modest incomes, relying heavily on grant funding. The Cranfield Trust partnership exceeded expectations, delivering long-term benefits for the charities involved.



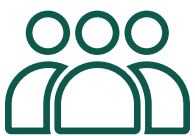
# Supporting individuals and families

## How our support is changing lives

In 2023/24 the MCF awarded £13.7 million to individuals and families

We support disadvantaged individuals and families across England, Wales, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and overseas.

### Support for daily living costs



2,409

grants provided at a cost of **£8.2M**, to **1,855** individuals to help them meet everyday living costs.

### Support for children and young people in education



411

grants provided at a cost of **£1.1M** to **294** children and young people to ensure they could fully access educational opportunities.

### Support for health, care and wellbeing



1,755

grants provided at a cost of **£4.4M** to **1,272** people to help them live healthier and more independent lives.

### In addition

Our regionally based Advice & Support Team offers a free and confidential service for Freemasons and their families. This can include discussing financial difficulties, exploring options to meet care needs, offering practical advice on the education and wellbeing of children or signposting to services and support available from the government, local authorities or other charities.

## Measuring the impact of our support

We survey the people we help to understand how our support has impacted their lives across three key areas: wellbeing, independence, and opportunity. These areas are fundamental to improving individuals' quality of life, and our survey responses allow us to reflect on the effectiveness of our grants and services.

### Wellbeing impact

Improved wellbeing was most closely linked to enhanced financial stability and feelings of connectedness with family, friends, and the community. Beneficiaries reported being better equipped to cope with difficult situations, manage finances, and maintain essential relationships.

*Having the MCF grant has helped me and my family considerably. We have been able to keep our heads above water... and give our children safety, security, and emotional support."*

### Beneficiary survey results

In 2023/24, we received 623 responses to our beneficiary survey. The feedback highlights the tangible ways in which our assistance has made a difference:

- **57%** of beneficiaries reported improved wellbeing.
- **30%** reported greater independence.
- **13%** reported that support helped them in other ways.

### Supporting independence

Independence was especially important for beneficiaries of pension age and those with disabilities, or who lived with a disabled person. Independence improvements were connected to having a safe living environment, financial wellbeing, and social connection.

*"I was able to get mental health support through the MCF as well as financial help. This gave me the confidence to seek further assistance through my GP."*

### Enhanced opportunities

Beneficiaries who highlighted access to opportunities as a key outcome reported improvements in personal choice, health, and education or training. These opportunities empowered beneficiaries to develop new skills and regain their independence.

*"With the help from the MCF, I could keep paying rent and bills; it saved me from personal insolvency. Through this new independence, I was able to engage in training and learn new skills towards a profession more suitable for me."*

# Improving mental health

Supporting mental health has always been a core focus of our work. In 2023/24, we continued to deliver mental health services to individuals and their families, addressing wellbeing needs. This year, we provided over £407,000 in mental health support grants, benefiting both children and adults.



£407,624

total spent on mental health support.



£71,155

was provided to support 68 children and young people.



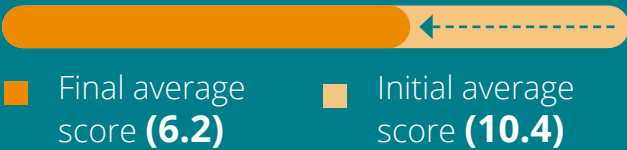
£336,469

was provided to support 403 adults.

## Impact of our mental health support

Our mental health service provider measures the impact of its mental health support by assessing beneficiaries before and after their sessions. Two key evaluation tools were used:

PHQ-9: Patient Health Depression Questionnaire



GAD-7: Generalised Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire



Our evaluation demonstrated a meaningful reduction in the average self-reported scores of two significant mental health conditions: depression and anxiety. Our beneficiaries reported a reduction from 'moderate depression' to 'mild depression' over the course of their treatment. Similarly, beneficiaries reported a reduction from 'mild anxiety' to 'minimal anxiety' when their treatment concluded. This data highlights the positive effect of the counselling services, with significant improvements in both depression and anxiety levels among beneficiaries.

## What our beneficiaries say

These testimonials show how life-changing our mental health services can be for those in need of emotional and psychological support.



I began the sessions feeling like I had a huge weight on my shoulders. After the help, the weight completely disappeared... The support and guidance I received was second to none."

Very helpful service. Until a friend recommended it, I would never have thought about asking for support. I'm so glad I did."

I was put at ease, as I had been apprehensive about talking about private problems to a stranger."

## STEVEN'S STORY

CASE STUDY

## Empowering young people

One example of the positive impact of the MCF's mental health services is the story of Steven, a 13-year-old boy who accessed counselling to help with his relationships at school. Feeling excluded by his peers, Steven experienced anxiety and low self-esteem. He wanted to increase his confidence and explore his feelings.

After completing six counselling sessions, Steven showed significant progress:

- His mood improved, and his anxiety became more manageable.
- He gained confidence and felt more comfortable asking for support and using the tools he learned to manage his wellbeing.

Steven's story exemplifies how counselling can empower young people to overcome challenges and improve their mental health, leading to better outcomes both personally and socially.

# Our profile

## Enhancing media coverage to highlight charitable impact

In collaboration with the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), Provinces, and charities' communication teams, the MCF raises awareness of its grants by seeking press coverage. By focusing on our many positive stories, we ensure our donors and the public are informed about the service Freemasonry provides to communities.

## Growing media presence

Since 2016, our charitable activities have featured in over 2,300 news articles and over 200 radio broadcasts, showcasing Freemasonry's positive impact on society.

In 2023/24, the MCF's media engagement resulted in an average of 27 news articles per month, reaching over 400,000 people. This coverage not only increased awareness of the MCF and Freemasonry but also helped local charities connect more deeply with their communities.

## Sector leadership

The MCF is committed to transparency and best practice in our grantmaking. This includes supporting initiatives such as 360Giving and participating in the Foundation Practice Rating, as well as sharing our learnings and impact within charity sector publications, websites and at events.

By combining strategic press coverage with a focus on best practices and transparency, the MCF continues to extend its charitable reach and positively promote Freemasonry.



# 92%

of charities reported that their experience with the MCF increased their awareness of Freemasonry and its charitable work.

## Positive media representation of Freemasonry

Media coverage of grants given on behalf of Freemasons across England and Wales, plays a key role in shaping the public's understanding of Freemasonry as a force for good in society.

In a recent survey:

- **92%** of charities reported that their experience with the MCF increased their awareness of Freemasonry and its charitable work.
- One charity noted, "It was very encouraging to receive a visit from the Freemasons. I feel this helps to form a better relationship."

Our growing media profile has attracted other charities to the MCF's grant-making programmes, allowing the MCF to extend its reach and provide more funding opportunities, while also boosting local charities' visibility and attracting further donations.

**The MCF was delighted to welcome its strategic partner, Cranfield Trust to Freemasons' Hall as the host of the panel discussion event 'Charity Management Matters'. The event was attended by over one hundred charity sector representatives and was held in the presence of Cranfield Trust Patron, HRH The Princess Royal."**





# Freemasonry: a force for good

## Engaged in our communities

Freemasonry is a unique members' organisation which has thrived for over 300 years. Having no political or religious affiliations, it comprises members of all ages, races, religions, cultures and backgrounds. Freemasons gather in their individual Lodges throughout the country where they have ceremonial traditions which encourage them both to be more tolerant and respectful and actively to fulfil their civic and charitable responsibilities; they also make time to eat, drink and meet together, and form lifelong friendships.

Service has always been a core principle of Freemasonry, which takes pride in its 300-year history of actively supporting those in need.

Freemasons play a crucial role at local, national, and global levels each year, dedicating both their time and resources to make a tangible difference to various organisations and communities.

**Freemasonry stands out as one of the largest contributors to charitable causes in the country, with almost £1 million donated per week.**

Freemasons engage in many activities including community fundraising and volunteering, as well as a varied programme of events where spouses, partners and families are welcome.

In addition to the charitable activities of the MCF outlined

in this Impact Report, Freemasons made substantial donations across the country to fund air ambulances, blood bikes and a number of emergency response vehicles, including two super aerial platforms for the London Fire Brigade.

Freemasonry does a huge amount for medical research into treatments for cancer, diabetes, heart disease and a wide range of other conditions, including Alzheimer's, by funding UK medical scientists to make ground breaking discoveries.

More recently, money raised has helped to support those affected by overseas disasters as well as those at home.

## Relief Chest Scheme

The MCF is committed to helping Freemasons make a difference to the world in which they live and offers practical support through a wealth of resources and tools.

Our Relief Chest Scheme offers donor advised funds for individuals, Lodges, Provinces and other recognised masonic organisations, which are used to generate funds for all types of charitable purposes.

These donations are held by the MCF in a restricted fund until the Relief Chest holder requests that a donation is made to a charity of their choice.

The Relief Chest Scheme is able to automatically claim and allocate gift aid on all eligible donations, which in 2023/24 amounted to **£1.4 million**.

The Relief Chest Scheme ensures that all statutory compliance and administrative requirements of the Charity Commission, Information Commissioner's Office and HMRC have been met.

All Relief Chest Scheme services are provided with no administration fee charged to the chest holder or donors.

For more information about Freemasonry and the United Grand Lodge of England, visit [ugle.org.uk](http://ugle.org.uk).

In 2023/24,  
Freemasons used  
the MCF's Relief  
Chest Scheme to  
make donations of  
**£5.4  
million**  
to charities of  
their choice.



**Masonic**  
Charitable Foundation

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## **Grand President**

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Grand Master

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## **Deputy President**

Edward Goodchild

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Alan Graham, MBE  
David Hudd  
Stephen Robinson  
Marie Shenton  
David Stockdale  
Bruce Walker  
Howard Wilson

## **Chief Executive**

Les Hutchinson

Charity number 1164703.  
Company number 09751836.

