

Better Lives

Supporting you through COVID-19



Encouraging opportunity,
promoting independence,
improving wellbeing

mcf.org.uk



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Guest welcome

“Over the last few months, the coronavirus pandemic has had – and is continuing to have – a negative impact on many individuals and families across England and Wales.

Whether people are needing to spend more money on feeding their families; are finding it difficult to access their pensions; are facing redundancy; or are experiencing loneliness or poor mental health as a result of social distancing – the distress felt across communities is sadly becoming a reality for many Freemasons and their families.

We have put together this special edition of *Better Lives* to bring support, reassurance, and information to you – as well as a little bit of inspiration and entertainment for your days at home! Read on for how we can support anyone facing hardship as a result of the coronavirus; how our charity partners are taking action to support communities; our top tips to feed your mind and body; as well as a bumper edition of puzzles for prizes!

Through these uncertain times, our aim is to remain a source of certainty and comfort to Freemasons and their families. We want to reassure you that the team at the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) is still here for you. Our Masonic Support team is ready to answer your questions, consider your applications and award grants to support you.

We have now set up home-working arrangements for all of our staff, putting in place the tools and resources they need to carry on supporting those who turn to us for help. We have adapted well to this new way of working, although it may take longer than normal for us to respond to your enquiries. Please be assured that we will respond to all emails, phone calls and voicemails.

Gareth Everett
Head of Masonic Support

Supporting you from home



Calvin is one of our team leaders, managing a team of grants officers who consider applications from the people who turn to us for help. Calvin has shared a day in his life, working from home – an insight into how his team has adapted to keep supporting you.

I am woken up...

...between 5:45 and 6am by my very excitable puppy, Tod, who is always desperate to go outside! The current rules allow us one allocated slot for exercise, so we use this early start to take a big walk around our local park. At that time it's always empty, and it's a great way to start the day.

I get home...

...around 7:30, have a shower and a well-earned bacon sandwich. I'm ready to sign on for work at 8am, nice and early.

I am currently working...

...at the dining table in my kitchen. My wife is also working from home and because we both need to do a lot of video conference calling, we try and make ourselves scarce whilst one of us is on the phone – I end up in the bedroom a lot of the time.

I start my day...

...by checking in with the other team leaders to let them know my plan for the day. I then contact my team for a status update on their workload and to see how they're generally getting on. We have one member of the team who has contracted coronavirus and is self-isolating, so I check in

with them each day to see how they're doing.

I have a video call with...

...my grants manager to discuss certain applications or policies and raise any questions from the team. Wherever possible, I have regular calls or video meetings with my team about the people and families we are supporting to ensure the most appropriate outcome for each person. We have a few new members of staff, so I spend time answering their questions and reviewing their work.

I'm working on...

...a big project to help us keep in touch with our beneficiaries who are coming up to their annual review of support. Usually, this takes place in the person's home but because of the current situation, we need to find alternative ways of completing these reviews. Staff members from other departments who have found themselves less busy have been drafted into our team to help complete these reviews over the phone. This extra help means my team can focus on looking at new applications and providing continuous support for those we are already helping.

Because of social distancing...

...some of our support is currently unavailable – because our suppliers cannot complete home visits. It's hard to have to put some applications on hold until everything goes back to normal.

After work...

...I focus all of my attention on trying to train Tod in our garden! I then cook dinner with my wife and spend the rest of the evening video calling friends and family – we've played a lot of interactive quizzes over the last few weeks!



Do you need support?
Get in touch with
our Enquiries team:

@ help@mcf.org.uk
☎ 0800 035 60 90





The current pandemic is something none of us could have predicted, and has caused unprecedented changes to our lives.

Unfortunately, many people's financial stability, health and wellbeing have been negatively impacted as a result.

We want to reassure you that we're still here to support anyone who is going through a difficult time in their lives – whether related to the current situation or not.

For those who have been unexpectedly affected by the coronavirus, here's how we can help:

Support for daily living



If you've found yourself with an unexpected loss of income – whether you're self-employed, an employee, or are on a zero-hours contract – **we can consider support to cover daily living costs**, helping you to make ends meet.



If you're struggling to pay your rent, mortgage or utility bills and are facing eviction or arrears, **we may be able to provide emergency one-off grants** to keep you safe and well in your home.

Looking after your wellbeing



If you feel your mood or mental health has been affected by social distancing or isolation, **we provide a free and confidential counselling service**, with trained professionals on hand to listen and give skilled guidance. Please contact our Enquiries team who can provide you with details for accessing the service.

Breaks for carers



We are aware that many forms of respite care, such as day centres or residential care, are reassessing their services in response to social distancing. If you are providing care for a loved one and have found a form of respite care that suits your needs, but are unable to afford it, **we may be able to provide support to help cover the costs.**

Education and skills for children and young people



We understand that many educational costs still need to be paid, and those looking to continue learning may want to make applications for further education later on in the year. If a reduced household income means your child or grandchild is struggling to stay in education, or is jeopardising their chance of continuing their learning, **we can consider support to keep them in education or on a vocational course.**

If your child or grandchild doesn't have the necessary equipment to continue learning at home or speak with friends and family, **we may be able to provide laptops** and other equipment to help them with their work and keep in touch with others.

How do I make an application?



If you would like to speak to us about making an application, please get in touch with the team – **at this time it is preferable to do so by email** – providing details about your situation and the best number on which to contact you.

In normal circumstances, an application involves a visit to your home from an MCF Visiting Volunteer or a member of our Advice & Support Team, to take you through the application form.

To ensure your safety, as well as that of our volunteers and staff, our Advice & Support Team are instead calling people who have enquired about support to take them through an application over the phone.

What should I do if I don't use email?

If you do not have access to email, please get in touch with your lodge Almoner who can put in an enquiry to the MCF on your behalf. Make sure they provide your telephone number to enable the team to get in touch with you. If you do not know your lodge Almoner, you can call us directly, however lines are busy and you may need to leave a voicemail.

Our support is likely to develop and adapt throughout this situation. Please visit our website **mcf.org.uk/coronavirus** for the latest information about our response. If you are unsure or just have a question, please get in touch to discuss your situation.

Thank you in advance for your patience if response times are a little longer than usual.

Get in touch with our Enquiries team to see if we can help you:

@ help@mcf.org.uk

☎ 0800 035 60 90



Social distancing is something which all households have had to learn very quickly, and the government's plea to 'stay home, protect the NHS and save lives' has been rapidly adopted.

But for vulnerable people and families, social distancing has led to new challenges which make life even harder. Lonely older people now have even less contact with others, and disadvantaged families are struggling to provide extra meals and home-schooling.

Two of the charities that the MCF is working in partnership with, Age UK and Home-Start, have provided some guidance and information to continue supporting older people and families with young children.



With more than 8.5 million older people already feeling lonely or isolated, social distancing can exacerbate existing difficulties and make tackling loneliness that bit harder.

Thankfully, Age UK exists to help older people when they need it most – whatever the global climate. Their dedicated webpage includes information on coronavirus; top tips to stay safe and well at home; and five ways people can support older people during this crisis.

We've pulled out a few key pieces of advice to help you through:

Make a list of essentials

Age UK recommends you make a list of the things you need day to day, including food, medicine, and household essentials to help you keep track and ensure you always have these at home. Don't forget to include any items you need to continue hobbies or interests at home – these are also important!

If you have food or medicine delivered to your home, it may take longer than expected so by planning ahead you can avoid running low. If you're worried about running out of medication, speak to your pharmacist.

Ask for help

Don't be afraid to call on your neighbours or family members to help you with food shopping or collecting medicine. Even if you don't know your neighbours very well, community spirit is high and those who are less vulnerable are coming together to support those who need it most. If you live rurally, or don't feel comfortable asking

neighbours for help, get in touch with your local Age UK branch for advice on how to access support.

Stay savvy

Whilst the majority of people are genuine, there may be some who try and take advantage of this situation for their own gains. To protect yourself against telephone or door-to-door scams, feel confident to follow the following advice:

- Don't ever feel pressured to accept help, if you don't feel comfortable.
- Do not hand over payment or give away bank details to someone who's offering to help – this should be done free of charge.
- If someone does your shopping, ask for a receipt so you can pay them to cover the cost of the items once they've been given to you.
- Ask for more information about people you don't know – where do they live and how can you contact them?

To access Age UK's full range of support and advice on staying safe, happy and healthy during coronavirus, visit:

ageuk.org.uk

Our £1 million three-year partnership with Age UK is funding their 'Later Life Goals' project, helping 10,000 older people become more socially connected. So far, the project has supported over 4,000 people and 57 per cent of people who often felt lonely, reported feeling less lonely thanks to the support they received.



Home-Start is dedicated to supporting families with young children through challenging times. With the current situation affecting the financial stability

and mental health of many families, Home-Start's work has never been more critical.

In response to the government's closure of schools and nurseries, Home-Start has pulled together online tools to help support families through social distancing, including fun and educational activities; how to keep up routines; and best ways to communicate with children about the coronavirus.

Here is an overview of the information they have provided:

Create a routine

Having a routine can be a comforting way for families to develop a new sense of 'normal'. Home-Start has put together a free, downloadable PDF planner to help structure days and provides suggestions as to what to include such as meals, activities and bedtime routines. Remember, schedules are just a guide and it's okay if they aren't stuck to every day!

Activities for families

Home-Start has gathered together their favourite practical activities and resources for families to do at home. From educational activities to help with home-schooling; to free wildlife watching activity sheets, not all of which require a garden; to problem-solving puzzles – visit their online resources page for inspiration.

Read Dave the Dog's story

An NHS nurse has written a short story to help reduce children's fear about the coronavirus. The story explains Dave the Dog's worries about coronavirus, and describes his anxieties on

To access Home-Start's advice on how to keep your family active, safe and connected during the coronavirus, visit:

home-start.org.uk

Discover more about our partnerships with leading charities, as well as our commitment to tackling social isolation in later life and opportunities in early years:

mcf.org.uk/community



Our £1 million three-year partnership with Home-Start is funding their 'Big Hopes, Big Future' programme, which works with parents and children to help them build the skills they need to be ready for the first day of school. We are excited to launch this partnership and to report back on its successes in the near future!

what he hears from friends and the news. Home-Start has provided a link to the free book online, so you can help ease any of your children's worries with this light-hearted story book.

If your child or grandchild is a little old for this story, try the following tips when talking to them about the coronavirus:

- **Let them lead:** ask them what they already know and how they're feeling. Does your child understand pictures better than words? Draw out your answers!
- **Reassure them:** explain that children are more likely to catch a cold than the virus. Explain the importance of washing their hands and limiting time outside, but that if they did get the virus, symptoms in children seem to be much milder.
- **Keep talking:** continue to talk and update your children when you learn new information. This way, you can help shape the way your children find out about new information and ensure it's explained in a way that's less scary to them.



For many households, adapting to life in lockdown has seen the need for creative sources of entertainment. Staying in touch with loved ones by video calling has become the new norm, whilst others have swapped the pub for an old jigsaw puzzle.

If you're running out of ideas or are lacking inspiration to fill your days, here are our top tips to keep you busy, happy and entertained!

Things to do for fun

1

Start a film club

Pick one or two nights a week to watch a film at the same time as your friends or family. Rate each film on plot, suspense or humour (depending on the genre of the film), and acting.

2

Clean out your wardrobe

Put aside any clothes you want to get rid of, and donate to a charity shop once they reopen.

3

Organise a treasure hunt for children

Hide clues, puzzles and riddles around the house and the garden, if you have one.

4

Call that friend you've been meaning to call

Now more than ever, is a good moment to reconnect with old friends – you have the time for that long overdue catch up!

5

Do some home improvements

Whether it's hanging the photo that has been sitting around, organising that 'odds and ends' drawer that doesn't quite open, or repotting your plants – why not do those jobs you've been meaning to do but haven't quite got round to?



Things to do for your appetite

1

Bake something delicious

Now is definitely a 'treat yourself' moment – whether it's an indulgent cake or savoury muffins, why not spend an afternoon cooking up a treat?

2

Make pizza from scratch

You could get a takeaway or you could buy the ingredients needed to make your favourite pizza. It's fun, cost-effective and delicious!

3

Try the 'rustle up' challenge

Usually, if we don't have all the ingredients needed in the cupboard, we wouldn't think twice of nipping to the shops to get anything we're missing. Set yourself a challenge to make a hearty meal using only your store cupboard essentials. Chicken nuggets and kidney beans? Sure! Pasta and veggie burgers? Why not?!

4

Make homemade granola

A brilliant way of using up all those nuts, seeds and oats in your cupboard and a welcome addition to yoghurt, crumbles or ice cream.

5

One-pot wonders

There are numerous one-pot dishes you can try if you're just not feeling up to cooking. From pasta dishes to salmon and couscous, the internet is rife with ideas – the BBC Good Food website is a good place to start!



On 1 April, the MCF celebrated its fourth birthday! The MCF team marked the occasion at home by whipping up homemade delights, including this decadent birthday cake

Things to do for your mind

1

Learn something new

Download the app 'Duolingo' on your phone to learn a new language for free, take up crocheting or perfect your pastry-making skills.

2

Start a new book

Commit to reading a certain number of pages each day, or a few chapters a week. Try something you wouldn't normally read.

3

Make time for movement

Whatever your mobility levels, try and get some movement into your day. Using your daily exercise allowance to go on a walk or run, or even trying yoga in your living room for the first time are all great ways of keeping your body moving. If you are limited in mobility, the NHS website has some great sitting exercises.

4

Try meditation

Allowing yourself time to stop, relax and breathe is incredibly important, even if you've spent all day at home. Give yourself 10 minutes to find a sense of calm, close your eyes and focus on your breathing or the sounds you can hear. You could even use a meditation app like Calm or Headspace to guide you.

5

Listen to a podcast or a radio show

There are hundreds of podcasts to choose from – which you can access on Audible, Apple Podcast or Google Podcast – and many radio shows have released their archives onto BBC Sounds.



Our top picks are:

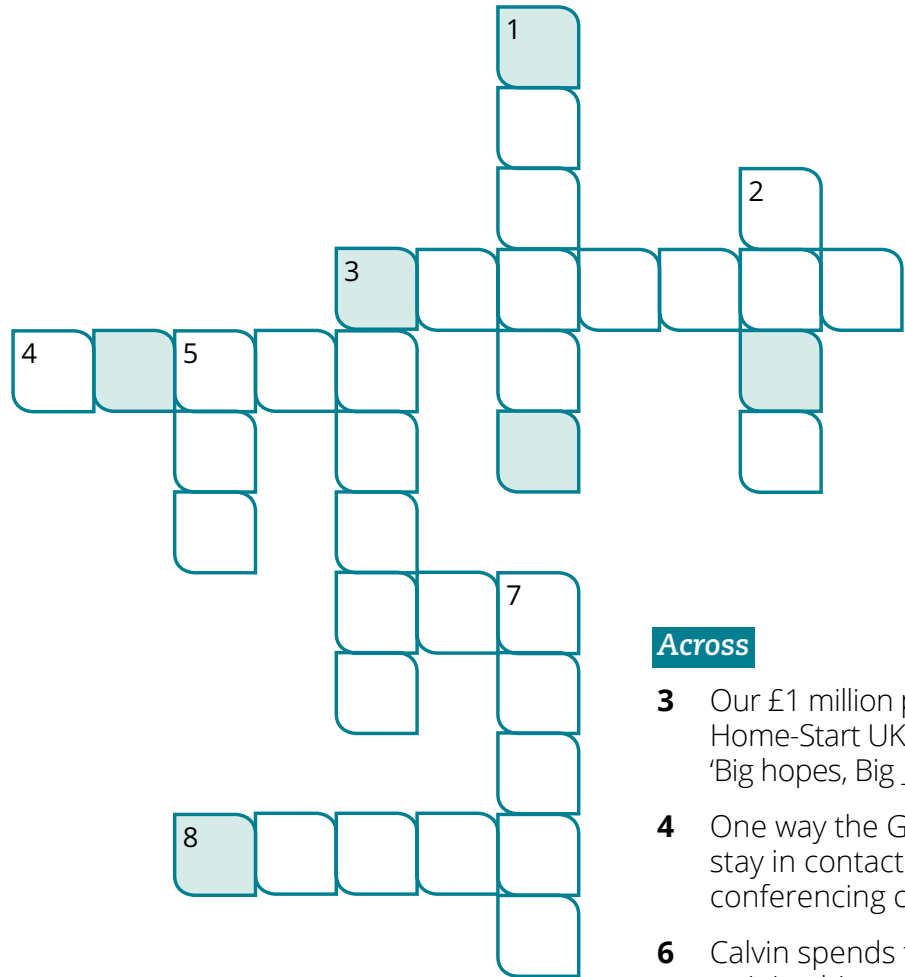
- **Off Menu with Ed Gamble and James Acaster** (Podcast) – A similar format to Desert Island Discs, but with food instead of music
🌐 offmenupodcast.co.uk
- **No Such Thing as a Fish** (Podcast) – Researchers from the television show QI share their four favourite facts
🌐 nosuchthingasafish.com
- **Just a minute** (BBC Sounds) – The long-running panel show where hesitation, repetition and deviation are forbidden
- **The Unbelievable Truth** (BBC Sounds) – For fans of 'Would I Lie to You?'



Crossword

Complete the crossword to win a £50 John Lewis voucher!

The answers to the crossword can all be found in this issue of *Better Lives*. Once you have completed the crossword, unscramble the letters in the shaded squares to spell a word related to Freemasonry. All entrants who submit the correct answer will be entered into a draw to win a £50 John Lewis voucher.



Down

- 1 Why not try the '___ up challenge' for dinner? (6)
- 2 Age UK encourages older people to ask for ___ from family, friends or neighbours (4)
- 3 The MCF recently celebrated its ___ birthday (6)
- 5 'Dave the ___' is a fictional character created by an NHS nurse to help children understand the coronavirus (3)
- 7 If you've found yourself with an unexpected loss of income, we can provide support for ___ living (5)

Across

- 3 Our £1 million partnership with Home-Start UK has funded their 'Big hopes, Big ___' programme (7)
- 4 One way the Grants team stay in contact is with ___ conferencing calls (5)
- 6 Calvin spends time after work training his puppy, ___, in the garden (3)
- 8 If you can, the best way to contact our Enquiries team is by ___ (5)

How to enter:

Write your crossword answer and/or circle the five differences you spot in the photos clearly on the tear-off flap. Fill in your details on the reverse of the flap and send it to:

**Masonic Charitable Foundation,
60 Great Queen Street, London,
WC2B 5AZ**

The winner will be notified before the next issue of *Better Lives* is printed.

Mini pub quiz

- 1 What do you get when you crystallise Carbon?
- 2 Which band released famous songs 'Don't stop me now' and 'Somebody to love'?
- 3 Which fictional character's daughters were called Regan, Goneril and Cordelia?
- 4 What is the logo of the ice cream brand, Walls?
- 5 What fictional character have Joaquin Phoenix, Jack Nicholson, Mark Hamill and Heath Ledger all played?
- 6 What's the connection between the above answers?

Riddle me this

- 1. What has cities, but no houses; forests, but no trees; and water, but no fish?
- 2. What starts with a T, ends with a T and has T in it?
- 3. What gets wetter and wetter, the more it dries?

	5			1			4	
	3	4	2					
	9	7		8		2		
9	4	3	7		5			2
					8			
			1		2	9		
3			9	4	1			7
6	7	9			3	4		1
4	8	1				5	3	

Sudoku

Fill the gaps in the grid so each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 – 9.

Remember, each number can only appear once in every row and column, but can appear more than once diagonally.

Mini pub quiz answers: 1. A diamond 2. Queen 3. King Lear 4. A heart 5. The Joker 6. Suits on a deck of cards
Riddle answers: 1. A map 2. A teapot 3. A towel



Write your crossword answer here:

Spot the difference

Pictured below is MCF Team Leader, Calvin's dog, Tod, who featured in this issue of *Better Lives*.

To be in with a chance of winning a £25 John Lewis gift card, simply spot the five differences between the two photos!



Congratulations to John Chapman

who correctly identified the word 'brother' in last issue's crossword – a £50 John Lewis voucher is in the post!

Well done to Monica Harvey

who spotted all five differences in last issue's spot the difference – a £25 John Lewis voucher is on its way!



> Follow our work and receive our exclusive lapel pin

Register for email updates about the work of the MCF and receive future issues of *Better Lives!*

Name

Email

Full address

.....

.....

Postcode

Province/ County

I am a:

- ☐ Freemason ☐ Interested person
☐ Family member of a Freemason

If you are a Freemason, are you a:

- ☐ Lodge Almoner ☐ Lodge Charity Steward
☐ Lodge Secretary ☐ None of these roles

If you are a family member of a Freemason, are you a:

- ☐ Partner of a Freemason ☐ Grandchild of a Freemason
☐ Child of a Freemason ☐ None of these

Are you:

- ☐ 25 and under ☐ 56 – 65
☐ 26 – 55 ☐ 66 and over

I would like to receive *Better Lives* magazine:

- ☐ By post ☐ By email

Please return this form to:

Masonic Charitable Foundation
60 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5AZ
Alternatively, visit mcf.org.uk/sign-up

The Masonic Charitable Foundation takes your privacy seriously and we will keep your personal information private and secure. Please visit mcf.org.uk/privacy for further information.



Ask the Almoner

Our resident Almoner answers your questions about the support we provide.



I emailed the MCF with an enquiry a couple of days ago, but I haven't heard back from them. Shall I call them just in case?

No – The Enquiries team will have received your email and are working hard to respond as soon as they can. Try and avoid repeat calling or emailing, as it will only delay response times.

I was made redundant a few months ago and am struggling to support my family. Can I still apply for help, even though it wasn't to do with the coronavirus?





Yes – The MCF is still here to help people who are facing a difficult time, whether it's related to the coronavirus or not. Get in touch with the team by email if you can, and they will respond to you as soon as they can.

I am hoping to move into an RMBI Care Co. home. Shall I still enquire to see if there are any spaces?

Yes – RMBI Care Co. homes are currently open to new admissions from prospective residents, although should RMBI Care Co. be called upon to support the NHS, vacancies may be reduced. Unfortunately, there is restricted access in the homes, to ensure the health and safety of residents in the current climate; however all homes are able to carry out virtual tours as necessary. Please contact your preferred home directly for enquiries. Contact details can be found at:

 rmbi.org.uk/care-homes



-  @Masonic_Charity
 @themcf
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For Freemasons, for families, for everyone
60 Great Queen Street | London | WC2B 5AZ
Tel: 020 3146 3333 | info@mcf.org.uk
mcf.org.uk


Charity number 1164703. Company number 09751836.

Since the beginning of March 2020...

...we've received over 900 enquiries from Freemasons and their families, and have awarded over 460 grants to more than 400 people.

We are still here for you!

If you need support, please get in touch with our Enquiries team:

-  help@mcf.org.uk
 0800 035 60 90

Stay up to date on our response to the coronavirus:

 mcf.org.uk/coronavirus

