

Freemasons support young carers with cookery, dance and drama workshops

Freemasons across England and Wales are lending a helping hand to young carers who are under increasing pressure as they support family members during lockdown.

The 200,000 members of the United Grand Lodge of England are pulling out all the stops to lend their support to vulnerable young people to help relieve the stress of looking after parents or older siblings who have mental and physical health issues.

In Bristol and Gloucestershire Freemasons are providing virtual activities for young carers with a summer activity programme. Whilst in Hampshire and Isle of Wight, they have identified, and are supporting, 1,000 young carers who are often left alone to cope.

There are almost seven million carers across the UK. This number represents one in ten people. Today 13,000 young and young adult carers, regularly provide care for more than 50 hours a week. Moreover, up to 1.5 million people in the UK care for someone with a mental health problem and approximately 840,000 thousand care for people with learning disabilities. ¹

In Bristol, Freemasons are working with the Carer Centre to deliver online activities for young carers, including a six-week summer holiday programme, to give them a break from their caring role. Plans include: arts activities, online home cookery, cookery, dancing and drama workshops, home science experiments; wellbeing and resilience classes and a virtual festival day.

¹ - Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee – report.

Meanwhile, Reading and West Berkshire Carers Hub has 420 carers struggling with no face-to-face help. To help improve their situation Freemasons are donating PC tablets so the carer can make contact with the charity outreach workers. The aim of their programme is for young carers to receive continuity of service and can link up with peers. They can also gain specific skills from activities which will help in their caring role e.g. financial skills and well-being techniques.

In Wiltshire a substantial number of Freemasons are carers in their own right. Nigel Dalby, for example, said: "Although I'm a retired NHS employee I am still in touch with my old team (a crisis team for adults with severe learning disabilities, challenging behavior and mental health issues) and although I am currently unable to be physically active due to recent surgery I am providing telephone support to one of the service users I used to work with". This is in addition to Wiltshire Freemasons donating £1,000 to Swindon Carers Centre.

While in Hampshire and Isle of Wight, they are identifying and supporting 1,000 young carers who are in crisis and need immediate intervention. They are assisting the Honeypot Children's Charity, who are posting out coloring books, birthday and post cards, puzzles, games and arts & crafts supplies to combat anxiety and loneliness. In addition they are helping to provide virtual activities and signpost young carers to other useful online resources.

Elsewhere, in Buckinghamshire the Freemasons are supporting Cares Bucks and Milton Keynes, providing cooked meals to the homes of Young Carers. They are also donating and distributing 'Pamper Packs' and craft materials to all their registered Carers. By supplying and delivering the above items the staff are given an opportunity to talk to the carers at length and for carers to interact with each other.

Buckinghamshire Freemasons are also helping Slough Carers provide support to unpaid carers. They are donating tablets to provide face-to-face contact for the most vulnerable individuals being cared for by Slough Carers.

While in Worcestershire the Cubit Club continues to offer help to those in need during these times. Freemasons have 55 members who are offering their services for anyone in need. The volunteers are spread around the province and are responding to multiple requests for help from carers.

In Staffordshire, Freemasons are helping Omega Support Givers providing care for carers some of whom are children caring for siblings or parents. They are also supporting Sandwell Crossroads Care with donation to help them continue their job providing a telephone advice service for people living with dementia. Lastly they are also helping The Carers Trust to improve support services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friends who are ill, frail, disabled or have mental health or addiction problems.

Dr David Staples, the chief executive of the United Grand Lodge of England, said: “We want to recognise the enormous contribution young carers make to families and communities throughout the UK. During Covid-19 they have been living in very challenge circumstances and need our support now more than ever. They do their best because they want to make a difference and care deeply for their family members. Freemasons are supporting these amazing individuals across England and Wales to show our gratitude for their efforts and the brilliant job they do every minute of every day.

“Freemasons stand behind our core values of Friendship, Integrity, Charity and Respect and are eager to help provide support for these cross-generational relationships and to highlight our respect and admiration for carers across UK.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee – report.

- 80% of carers report that caring for someone living with a long-term condition has had a negative impact on their health. In addition;
- £1 billion in carers' allowance is unclaimed each year.
- Carers of people with dementia assess their own quality of life as 7.7 out of 12 overall. This is lowest in London at 7.3 and highest in the North East at 8.4.
- 39% of carers spent 100 or more hours each week looking after or caring for a person with dementia, with 52% spending 50 hours or more per week.
- Over half (51%) of carers had been in their caring role for more than five years.

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About the United Grand Lodge of England:

- The [United Grand Lodge of England](https://www.ugle.org.uk) was founded at the Goose and Gridiron Pub in London in 1717.
- It has 48 Provinces across the country and more than 7,000 Lodges, with students over 18 able to join one of the 85 University Scheme Lodges.
- Freemasons use four important guiding principles to help define their path through life: integrity, friendship, respect and charity.
- One of the oldest social and charitable organisations in the world, Freemasonry's roots lie in the traditions of the medieval stonemasons who built our cathedrals and castles.
- Membership is open to people from all backgrounds and the organisation's aim is to empower members to be the best they can be – it's about building character, supporting members as individuals and helping them make a positive contribution to society.
- Freemasonry is one of the largest charitable givers in the country, contributing more than £48m to deserving causes in 2018 alone. Freemasons do not only donate money – more than 18.5 million hours of volunteer work were undertaken by Freemasons in 2018.

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