

Urgent Appeal: Frequently asked questions

'For the people we serve, during this crisis, there is, as we are all so aware, acute and ongoing need. Even once the worst of the crisis is over, there will be the desperate need for healing and rebuilding within families and communities. Mothers' Union, through our exceptional members, has always been one of the best positioned charities to give support to those in such need throughout Britain and Ireland and worldwide.' – Sheran Harper, Worldwide President

We know, like us, you will have many questions and we hope this FAQ goes some way to answering the most pressing ones. If you have further questions that we can answer to build this resource further, please email us at marketing@mothersunion.org

➤ I would like to donate to the urgent appeal

Thank you for supporting Mothers' Union at this critical time. You can donate by any of the options below:

- Using the donation form and reply envelope you received with your recent copy of *Families Worldwide*
- Online at www.support.mothersunion.org
- Over the phone on 0207 222 5533 - select option 1
- By posting a cheque to, 'Mothers' Union, Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, LONDON, SW1P 3RB' Please ensure you share your contact details so we are able to record the donation and also thank you.

Despite the current situation we are aiming to acknowledge postal donations as soon as possible, however you may experience a delay in receiving confirmation of your gift. From sending your donation please give a minimum of 14 days before contacting us. If you have any questions, we would be glad to hear from you on the number above (Mon-Fri 9.30 – 16.00)

➤ Why are members being asked to support the central charity?

For the first time in our recent history, we are in the unprecedented position of having to ask our members to support the running of our central charity through an emergency appeal. Mothers' Union is not immune to the impact of COVID-19. In common with many charities, we are facing a significant shortfall in income, currently forecast to be well in excess of £1 million this year alone.

This is because the UK's necessary measures to stop the spread of the virus have abruptly halted the income we would normally receive from conference room hire at Mary Sumner House (which is over £500,000 a year) as well as summer fundraising events. On top of that, income from our retail shop is on the decline. Even with all our safety nets in place, this tidal wave of losses is hitting our charity all at once in a way no one could have foreseen.

We are also taking stringent measures to cut costs as much as possible, including in staffing.

➤ I would like to opt out of receiving further mailings from Mothers' Union

To opt out of any future mailings from Mothers' Union please email marketing@mothersunion.org or you can call us on 0207 222 5533.

➤ Why did I receive a copy of *Families Worldwide* with the mailing?

Supporters and non-members: During such global crisis, prayer and fellowship are central to our response. Therefore, we've included a copy of *Families Worldwide* so if you

wish, you can join the worldwide movement of 4 million members each day, uniting in prayer to remain strong and connected in the face of such adversity.

Members:

We felt that it would be putting members at risk to follow the usual approach of delivery by hand but wanted to make sure you still have these prayer resources to sustain you as we are all unsure when free movement will be possible again.

➤ **Why is the return address for this appeal not Mary Sumner House?**

As our central office is closed, we are working with a response handler, Telebank who will help with processing the donations and sending out acknowledgement letters. Their address is: 126 Fairlie Road, Slough, SL1 4PY. We will be regularly checking for cheques received at MSH, but the use of Telebank will ensure that a volume of donations can be processed and acknowledged more promptly, this is also a highly cost effective approach in our current circumstances.

➤ **I would like to make a complaint about this appeal**

We are sorry to hear that you wish to make a complaint and we will ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately. Please do not hesitate to contact us on the number or address mentioned above, or by emailing us at marketing@mothersunion.org

➤ **Why did I receive this appeal? (I cannot afford to give to any charities now)**

We chose the recipients based on the most up to date data held on our central database at the time of mailing. This data is updated and managed by your dioceses.

As with all of our fundraising activities, there is no pressure to give to Mothers' Union if you are not able. Mothers' Union is grateful for your support however and whenever you choose to demonstrate it.

➤ **The person you have written to is deceased and it's really upsetting**

We are sorry to hear this and offer our deepest condolences. With every mailing, we do all we can to try and avoid this from happening. However, as we rely on the information to be updated by your diocese we are not in full control and at times mistakes can happen. We know how distressing this can be and we are once again very sorry.

If you are aware that someone has received anything from Mothers' Union who should not have, please do let us know by emailing marketing@mothersunion.org and we will make the appropriate changes. It is important that any mistakes are not just communicated to the team at MSH but also to your diocese as they might overwrite your record with old information if you have not updated them as well as us.

➤ **Are you running any emergency relief projects?**

Mothers' Union members are supporting others in their communities locally during the crisis and we are providing resources to enable that. But we are focusing our efforts for structured programmes on recovery and rebuilding, which are the real strength of MU around the world, and where we can make the most difference.

➤ **Shouldn't we as members be supporting our own branch and local priorities due to COVID-19?**

Yes, our members are astute at identifying local priorities and needs and mobilising together to find solutions to them and we wholeheartedly want this to continue. We especially want members to reach out – safely – however they can, to other members and to the community, particularly those that might be more isolated than others. You can find support in our resources here: <https://www.mothersunion.org/resources-support-us-challenging-times>

We have also started to do Midday Prayers via Facebook Live led by members and staff. This is a great way to join together in prayer and connect with fellow members around the world. We are also planning to do special services via this channel as well.

Mothers' Union staff are doing exactly the same to find ways to support as many members and people in our communities as we can, because we are all part of the same movement, together in our faith, as we continue to carry out the work and support one another in the same way that Mary Sumner did in 1876.

Please hear a message from our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oS42m0f3w>

➤ **If we are able to make a contribution to this appeal, how do we know it will be used well and it will save the central charity?**

At Mary Sumner House, we have a daily responsibility to keep the central charity serving members and the movement whilst ensuring that the central charity is financially sustainable, now and for the future. In doing so, we are accountable to our trustees, who are members like you. We are in constant contact with our trustees to ensure that we are operating in line with good governance and due diligence every step of the way and that we are transparent with our staff, trustees and members in the same way too.

It remains in all of our interests to ensure that we keep the central charity open, so that we can coordinate and actively support the work of Mothers' Union's (and Mary Sumner's) legacy in the 84 countries that we operate in and this FAQ supports all of our activities including the urgent appeal in doing so. We have committed to feeding back to the membership through the provinces and dioceses on how the money is used.

➤ **Will there be a reduction in support for members at this time?**

In times of crisis we all often go above and beyond to support those that we are connected with and care for. We find ourselves now supporting members in many more ways as we unite behind this unprecedented disruption to our daily lives. Many of the ways we are supporting members can be found here:

<https://www.mothersunion.org/resources-support-us-challenging-times>

➤ **Will my membership fees increase to support the appeal as well?**

Ongoing support will be required to sustain the charity after the crisis, and the subscriptions are one way of doing this. These are reviewed annually, and will be looked at by the Trustees over the summer, taking into account the impact of COVID-19 – and also looking at the opportunity from 2021, to deliver a member publication direct to your doorstep on an ongoing basis.

➤ **Will I still be a Mothers' Union member if the central charity is forced to close?**

Locally, each member will belong to their own branch or group within the diocese, and these can continue. What will be lost is the support of faith and other resources, guidance on governance matters, and the ability to connect to other Mothers' Unions around the world.

As the central charity, should we be forced to close this will have significant impact on the work of the movement in Britain and Ireland and around the world. For example:

- We will not be able to support up to one million people we are currently able to reach through our Britain and Ireland and overseas development programmes.
- We will not be able to support members and the movement including through events like Thy Kingdom Come and the Annual Gathering.
- Our ability to campaign on an international level for issues such as Gender Based Violence against women would be diminished somewhat.

➤ **Why can't you sell Mary Sumner House?**

Mary Sumner House is a building built by and for its members. It is a legacy of Mary Sumner's work that we hope will serve us well into the future.

Whilst the building could theoretically be sold, the unequivocal message from the membership, both within Britain and Ireland and around the world, has always been that this would be undesirable.

It is also important to note that Mothers' Union's financial need arising from this crisis is acute. The sale of an asset this valuable could be expected to take many months, if not years to conclude rendering it an unviable solution for our current need, particularly as the Government have currently placed an effective stop on the property market.

Finally, the current economic shock has had a downward impact on asset prices. With that in mind and having sought external advice, we have been advised that selling a building within the context of that economic downturn (that we don't know the long-term effects of right now) is not in the charity's or the movement's best interest.

We have plans to extend the value of the building over time to enable us to increase our support for our work in Britain and Ireland and worldwide. This includes enhancing income through improved conferencing facilities and reducing the amount of space within the building occupied by the MSH team. This project will only be further progressed when economic circumstances allow.

➤ **If Mary Sumner House is currently closed, can central charity staff numbers be reduced?**

We are a responsible employer of over 40 staff, many of whom have worked for our central charity and the movement for many years (some as long as 20 years or more). It is our aim to ensure that we can continue to support all of our staff through an unprecedented crisis that we all equally face. We are closely following Government guidance on this.

We have already, seamlessly, implemented remote working and are looking at the best ways we can continue to support the membership. However, like every charity facing this crisis, we have to be realistic and we know that charities and businesses across the country will be in equally difficult situations and having to make equally difficult decisions.

We know that:

- Staff costs total approximately one third of total budgeted expenditure meaning action in this area is required.
- From April, our senior leadership team took a voluntary reduction to their take home pay of 20% until the situation is resolved financially.
- We have already used the Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough team members whose roles have effectively ceased due to Mary Sumner House closing. We have now completed a second stage of furloughing staff after evaluating the business needs of the charity in the period of lockdown. We will be continuing to monitor this. Over 40% of our staff of 40 will be on furlough by the end of April.
- We have enacted an immediate freeze on new recruitments.
- Fixed term contracts, other than the most essential, will close.
- Redundancies will be our option of absolute last resort. The hope is that by sharing a little pain each we can reduce the likelihood of this option being required on a significant scale.

➤ **Why can't you use the existing Relief Fund?**

The Relief Fund is intended to assist disaster preparedness in communities around the world. It would not be possible to use these funds to relieve the financial crisis facing the central charity owing to the nature of the restrictions applied to the fund. It is also important to note that the relief fund is not held as an available cash pot. It is instead represented by a whole range of asset classes, many of which could not be released at short notice.

Whilst the Relief Fund was intended to aid disaster response, we have learnt to look at (and fund) disaster response in different, more effective ways. As it stands, this fund has been allocated and the urgent appeal we are now seeking support for, supersedes that.

You can read more about emergency aid and relief and our response to it [here](#).

➤ **What will happen if we are unable to raise the funds required?**

It is our fear that despite all our best efforts that the central charity will be forced to close, this will mean that the support to the individual dioceses will be lost, as will all coordination of the wider movement.

➤ **Will future donations I make to MSH be used for the purpose outlined in this urgent appeal?**

Any donations made to Mary Sumner House for specific purposes will be used within the remit of each purpose's overarching fund. Mothers' Union makes use of restricted and unrestricted funds. Where monies placed in restricted funds are used solely within that funds purpose, donations made to unrestricted funds are used around the organisation as and where the need is greatest. Should you donate to us without a specific purpose in mind, the monies will be used in this fashion, enabling us to help our members around the world in the best way possible.

➤ **Will the central Mothers' Union charity undergo a full financial review considering the requests you are making?**

Given the gravity of the situation, Mothers' Union is certainly keen to ensure we, as a worldwide organisation, can continue our work into the future and survive the predicament we find ourselves in. When the time comes, we will take all the necessary steps to enable us to better adapt and operate in situations such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, and we will keep you informed of our plans in due course. The priority for all of us now, is to ensure we can get to a point where we can reflect on our finances and how they can sustain us better in future.

➤ **How much does the central Mothers' Union charity hold in reserves for such situations?**

The charity's stated reserves policy is to hold free cash reserves equivalent to six-nine months unrestricted expenditure. At the start of 2020 our free cash reserves were equivalent to approximately one month of unrestricted expenditure.

We have committed to building reserves over time, in tandem with ensuring maintaining ongoing levels of membership support but had not yet reached the target which we set ourselves, which has increased the urgency of our present situation. The reality is, even if we had reached this target, the situation we find ourselves in is so extraordinary, any realistic reserves figure would not be enough to see the charity through without further assistance.