

Community reserve volunteer handbook



Thank you for registering as a community reserve volunteer. You have joined a network of like-minded people who can offer crucial assistance in the event of a major local emergency.

This handbook will provide you with all the information that you need for the role, as well as some useful links to where you can find out more about the British Red Cross.

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Essential information

About the role

Community reserve volunteers support their local community during a major emergency, by doing their bit to lend a hand when disaster strikes.

No specialist skills are required and when an incident occurs in your area, you are not obliged to volunteer.

You can also leave us at any time. Just email [**reserves@redcross.org.uk**](mailto:reserves@redcross.org.uk) with the subject line 'OPT OUT'.

Q&A

When will I be contacted?

You will be contacted in the event of a major emergency in your local area where we need additional support, and when we are planning training exercises. You will also receive occasional newsletters updating you on the latest news.

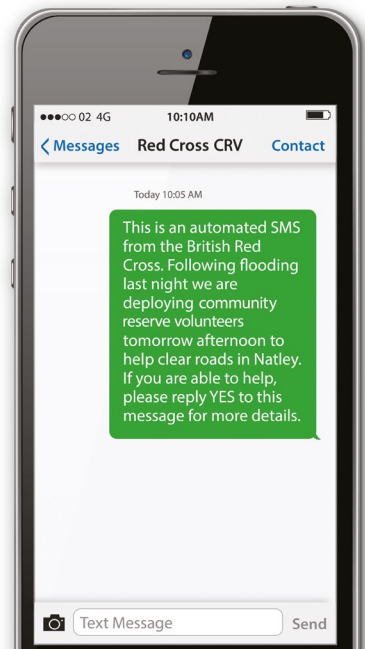
How will I be contacted?

If an emergency strikes in your area and we need your help, we will send you an SMS message with all the details, including what's happened, where, what tasks will be involved, and when shifts will be running. If you are available, simply reply 'yes'. You will then be sent more information on where to meet.

We may also occasionally email you in the event of local and non-local emergencies to update you on our response efforts, although we will only ask for your assistance via SMS message.

We will always contact you on our number 07441 900 799. You might want to save this number in your phone so you know it's us messaging you.

If your details change at any time, please let us know at [**reserves@redcross.org.uk**](mailto:reserves@redcross.org.uk).



What should I bring with me?

Make sure you are dressed appropriately for the weather and the activities you will be doing. Please bring a form of photo ID and any medication that you require, as we won't be able to provide you with this if you forget.

We will provide refreshments, but you may wish to bring a drink and snack along, too.

We will always let you know how long a typical shift will last in advance of your arrival, so that you can be prepared.

Please do not bring any unregistered volunteers, children or pets with you.

How will I know what to do when I arrive?

When you arrive you will be met by your team leader who will brief you about the incident and tell you what you will be doing. They will also provide you with any relevant training you will need.

You will always work in a small team with other community reserve volunteers, and will be guided by an experienced member of the British Red Cross.

What will I be doing?

While we prepare for all scenarios, we can never fully predict the demands of a crisis. You might be expected to:

- > fill sandbags
- > clear roads and paths
- > move furniture upstairs in a house before or during a flood
- > sort essential supplies and stock
- > carry out administrative roles
- > assist response teams in carrying equipment
- > map the area for our response teams.

You will receive guidance and training for any tasks that you undertake.

Although you won't be working directly with members of the public, your work is important as it allows our trained responders to spend more time providing face-to-face support to those directly affected by emergencies.

You shouldn't undertake any tasks that you have not been asked to do by your team leader. If you feel uncomfortable performing any task that you have been assigned, please speak to your team leader as soon as possible.

Please make your team leader aware before your shift of any health considerations or additional support that you might require so that they can give you appropriate tasks to do.

Will I be reimbursed for my expenses?

You will be reimbursed for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Your team leader will explain how you can reclaim these during your debrief. Please make sure you keep hold of any receipts that you acquire on your way to and from volunteering.

Comments and complaints

Your team leader will be your main point of contact whilst you are volunteering. Be sure to speak to them if you have any questions or concerns throughout your shift. You can also email us using the email address below.

How to contact us

You can get in touch with us any time at [**reserves@redcross.org.uk**](mailto:reserves@redcross.org.uk).

Community reserve volunteer checklist

Before you leave

- > Make sure you are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear.
- > Make sure you have eaten and bring a snack and drink with you.
- > Don't forget your photo ID.

When you arrive at your destination

- > Follow the instructions in your SMS message on who to inform of your arrival.
- > Complete a sign-in sheet.
- > Await a briefing.
- > Inform your team leader of any health or support issues that you have, so that we can support you in your role.

Briefing

- > The briefing is the information that you receive before you start any activities. This ensures that you will be clear about your task and what is expected of you.
- > Briefings will always be given at the start of a shift and, where necessary, regular updates will be provided.
- > During the briefing you will be given all the necessary training required for your role, and appropriate health and safety information.

During your shift

- > Should you have any queries or concerns during your shift, please report to your team leader.
- > Refreshments will be made available throughout your shift.
- > If approached by the media, please direct them to your team leader.

At the end of your shift

- > Don't leave without informing your team leader.
- > Attend the debriefing to provide feedback and raise any comments or concerns.
- > Don't take any kit home that you have borrowed from the British Red Cross during your shift.

Debriefing

- > The debriefing allows us to learn from what we do and help continuously improve our work. A debrief will take place at the end of your shift.
- > A debrief is important and provides a space to discuss your experience and raise any concerns you may have. You will be able to evaluate what went well, what didn't go so well, and what could be done better next time. It is also a time for you to receive a well-deserved thank you, recognising your effort and hard work.

Mutual expectations

The British Red Cross makes every effort to ensure you receive the appropriate support and feel valued as a volunteer.

What you can expect from us

- > To be appreciated and respected, whoever you are and whatever your background.
- > A clear explanation of what your role will involve and appropriate training prior to any tasks being undertaken.
- > An identified team leader who will be available for questions and support throughout the duration of your shift.
- > The opportunity to decline or change your mind about a voluntary activity, without any pressure.

What we expect from you

- > To act responsibly at all times, as a representative of the British Red Cross.
- > To respect your fellow volunteers and the decisions of your team leader.
- > To arrive in appropriate clothing and bring any supplies you need (food, medication, etc.).
- > To bring your photo ID with you when you arrive to a shift, and not to bring unregistered volunteers, children or pets.

Additional information

About the British Red Cross

The British Red Cross is a volunteer-led humanitarian organisation dedicated to helping people in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. We are part of a global voluntary network, responding to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies.

When emergencies occur in the UK, the British Red Cross supports the police, ambulance and fire services, health authorities and utility companies. Whether it's responding in severe weather, assisting residents following a house fire, or supporting statutory partners at a road traffic accident, we have thousands of volunteers across the UK ready to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need.

Our fundamental principles

Our fundamental principles guide the work and decisions of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for all Red Cross and Red Crescent workers in all situations and at all times.

Humanity We are guided by a desire to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

Impartiality We don't discriminate on the basis of nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinion. We help people in crisis whoever and wherever they are.

Neutrality We don't take sides in conflict or engage in any political, racial, religious or ideological debates.

Independence We are independent from government.

Voluntary service We are a voluntary organisation and are not motivated by a desire for gain.

Unity There can only be one Red Cross society in any country and it must be available for everyone to join.

Universality All Red Cross and Red Crescent societies across the globe have equal status.

Our values

Our core values are to remain compassionate, courageous, dynamic and inclusive, reflecting the principles of our daily work.

Who we need support from

The British Red Cross needs volunteers like you, from all walks of life and backgrounds, who can bring different skills and experiences to help with our humanitarian work.

Preparing for emergencies

What can I do to prepare for emergencies?

- > Our website provides information on the simple precautions you can take to prepare for a range of emergency situations, along with advice on how to cope if they happen.

redcross.org.uk/prepare

- > You can also download our free emergency app. Our unique app delivers real-time alerts, severe weather warnings and practical advice on what to do in an emergency.

redcross.org.uk/emergencyapp

Where can I find out how to learn first aid?

- > Our free first aid app features simple, easy advice on 18 everyday first aid scenarios. With videos, interactive quizzes and simple step-by-step advice, it's never been easier to learn first aid.

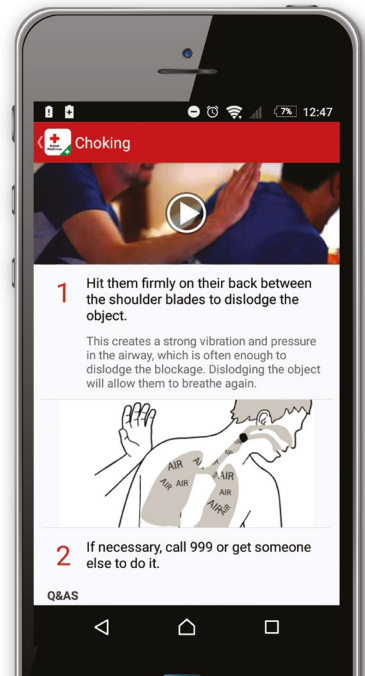
redcross.org.uk/app

- > Our YouTube channel also contains lots of useful videos.

youtube.com/BritishRedCross

- > You can also find out more about first aid on our website.

redcross.org.uk/firstaid



What other volunteering opportunities are there?

To find out about further volunteering opportunities with the British Red Cross, including how to become a regular emergency response volunteer, visit [**redcross.org.uk/getinvolved**](https://www.redcross.org.uk/getinvolved).

Useful links

- > Our main website
[**redcross.org.uk**](https://www.redcross.org.uk)
- > The community reserve volunteers website
[**redcross.org.uk/reserves**](https://www.redcross.org.uk/reserves).

The community reserve volunteer project is supported by Aviva; enabling the British Red Cross and local communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis.

Supported by

