

**The power  
of kindness**

# **Check in and chat volunteering**

**Information and guidance**

03.04.2020



## Thank you!



Hello and thank you for signing up as a volunteer during these challenging times.

I'm Simon, and I run the crisis response team at the British Red Cross. We help people across the UK when any kind of emergency happens, and the coronavirus outbreak is no exception.

Although everything feels uncertain now, we're so grateful you want to share your kindness to support your community. Our priority is making sure no-one is left behind, and we couldn't do it without you.

The **check in and chat role** will help people who are self-isolating and unable to leave their house, providing them with contact with the outside world and a much-needed person to talk to. You might be self-isolating too, but still feel well enough to check in with others. You can read more about the role below.

Thank you again. We really appreciate your support and look forward to welcoming you to our team.

Simon Lewis  
Head of Crisis Response  
British Red Cross

## **British Red Cross 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.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

The British Red Cross is committed to being a provider of inclusive volunteering opportunities. We encourage applications from people from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds, cultures and experiences – including disabled and ethnic minority candidates. This is to contribute to the breadth of experience we need to respond to people in crisis.

We seek to ensure that our organisation and our services are relevant and accessible to all. We value fresh perspectives and insights gained by involving and welcoming people from the widest possible diversity of background, culture and experience.

## Key contact information for volunteers

I have a safeguarding concern – there is an immediate risk to the child, young person or adult	<b>999</b>
I have a safeguarding concern – a child, young person or adult has been abused or harmed or are at risk of abuse or harm	<b>British Red Cross Safeguarding Team</b> <b>0300 004 0377</b>
I need support with my own wellbeing	<b>British Red Cross Employee Assistance Programme</b> <a href="http://www.healthassuredeap.co.uk">www.healthassuredeap.co.uk</a> To login, use the username and password: <b>BRC</b>
I have a question about my volunteering	British Red Cross National Volunteer Welfare Team <a href="mailto:volunteerwelfare@redcross.org.uk">volunteerwelfare@redcross.org.uk</a>

We have a short online training course which has information on how to keep yourself safe while you are volunteering, [available here](#).

## Acceptance and Agreement

I confirm that I have read and understood the requirements of the role/s for which I have applied to volunteer. I understand the boundaries and responsibilities associated with this role and know of no reason that I am unable to safely and competently carry out these duties.

Roles are subject to change as the situation develops so you may be contacted about a role that is not explicitly outlined in the description.

## The check in and chat role

This role involves a one-off phone call to a socially isolated, vulnerable person for a general check in. You may need to signpost the person to other support if they need this.

You will be given all the information about who you need to call through the GoodSAM app.

### Remember:

- The purpose of the one-off call is for a general check in with an individual who may be isolating, if you feel the person needs some more in-depth support please advise that this would be out of your remit
- The purpose of the call is NOT to sell, ask for fundraising or acquire any personal information
- Please allow time after the call to contact us if you are worried about the person

### Do's

- ✓ Do this in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed
- ✓ This is a one-off call to chat to the person and see how they are doing, it is an opportunity to have a general conversation around day to day life! Remember these people may not have spoken to anyone in a few days.
- ✓ Please ensure you withhold your number – you can do this by entering 141 before the beginning of your number: e.g. Dial 141 0777 \*\*\*\*\*
- ✓ The call should last no longer than 15 minutes
- ✓ When you phone the individual: please introduce yourself as a British Red Cross Volunteer, tell them why you are calling and book in a time that suits you both
- ✓ Confirm who you are talking to and explain why you are speaking to them
- ✓ Be polite and always try to remain professional
- ✓ Listen carefully to the person you are speaking to
- ✓ If the person you are speaking to is concerned about Covid-19 symptoms, direct them to the NHS 111 website
- ✓ Be aware that people may need extra support. Where appropriate point them towards other British Red Cross services details of which can be found on our website
- ✓ Make them aware of local services in the area that the person you are speaking to could be directed to (e.g. their local Age UK)
- ✓ Make use of the [Turn2us](#) website, developed in partnership with British Red Cross for further information on benefits and grants
- ✓ If the person asks to donate to the Red Cross thank them and say that if they wish to donate they can do so through our website or by phoning 03004561155 Say you are sorry, but you cannot transfer their call

### Don'ts

- ✗ **Don't give medical advice** – direct the person you are speaking to the NHS 111 helpline or website (for Covid-19 related symptoms) or their GP
- ✗ **Don't offer or provide counselling**– direct the person you are speaking to, to their GP in the first instance
- ✗ **Don't** agree to speak to medical professionals on their behalf – encourage the person you are speaking to, to do this themselves
- ✗ **Don't** be dismissive of their concerns
- ✗ **Don't** allow the person you are speaking to keep you on the call for a long period, but ensure that you give enough time to listen to and understand their concerns
- ✗ **Don't** attempt to multitask – give the person you are speaking to your full attention
- ✗ **Don't** pass the details of the person you are speaking to on to anyone
- ✗ **Don't** make promises to the caller that the British Red Cross may not be able to undertake
- ✗ **Don't** agree to undertake any activity on behalf of the caller on a personal basis either in a paid or unpaid capacity
- ✗ **Don't** give out your personal details to the person you are speaking to (such as your address, email address or phone number)
- ✗ **Don't** agree to accept gifts or money for the service from the person you are speaking to.
- ✗ **Don't ask the person for a donation to the Red Cross**

### Starting the conversation

It can be daunting to start a conversation with a stranger, particularly when it is over the phone. Remember, they might be as nervous as you are! Here are some tips that you might find helpful.

- How are you?
- Tell me about you?
- Have you had a chance to talk to family or friends today?
- What's keeping you busy at the moment?
- Are you managing OK?
- Have you been able to get some fresh air?
- What has been the highlight of your week?
- Use verbal cues so that the person knows you are paying attention e.g. That sounds interesting; I see; or repeat back what they have said.

## During the conversation

Use these prompts to help you if these situations come up on the call.

### ***I'm finding it really hard not seeing anyone.***

Acknowledge that this is hard for them. Ask if there is anyone they would usually meet who they could call for a chat.

### ***Would you be able to call me again next week?***

Explain that you are unable to call the person regularly, but they could hear from another volunteer if they would like to.

### ***I'm finding this all very upsetting and sad and I don't think I can cope.***

Acknowledge that this is an upsetting time. Ask them if they have anyone they can talk to. Suggest that they get in touch with their GP for additional support.

### ***I've been told to stay at home but surely it's OK to go and see my friend if I stay outside and talk to them through the window?***

The guidance from the NHS needs to be followed. You can go out once a day for exercise as long as you stay 2 metres away from other people. You can still call your friend on the phone.

### ***My heating and lighting isn't working***

Encourage them to get in touch with who they would usually contact if there was a problem.

### ***My pendant alarm isn't working***

Encourage them to ring the pendant company to report that their alarm isn't working.

### ***I don't have enough food and/or toiletries***

Ask if there is a neighbour or a friend who could go shopping for the person.

### ***My prescription has run out***

Ask them to get in contact with their GP surgery to arrange for a repeat prescription to be delivered to them.

### ***I don't know when my carer is coming***

Ask them if they have a contact number they can call to find out when their carer is able to come.

## Ending the conversation

The call should last no longer than 15 minutes. When you see that time approaching, try to draw the conversation to a close. End the conversation on a positive note if possible e.g. by saying 'it's been lovely talking to you'.

## Looking after yourself

Do what you need to do to keep yourself physically and mentally well. In times of crisis it is very easy to overcommit yourself so please don't volunteer for long hours. It might sound counter-intuitive to suggest doing less during a crisis, but this is a marathon, not a sprint. Before you say yes to a task, think about whether you are fully prepared - both mentally and physically. It is absolutely OK to say no if you need to take a rest to refresh yourself.

We have a short online training course which has information on how to keep yourself safe while you are volunteering, [available here](#).

We also have a YouTube channel with information about [mental health in emergencies](#) which you might find useful.

If you need to leave your house as part of your volunteering, please [follow the guidance](#) on social distancing.

[Watch this short video](#) for the World Health Organisation to see effective hand washing in action.

If you start to notice any symptoms visit the [NHS coronavirus website](#) for the latest advice. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.



## Data protection and confidentiality

When you are volunteering for the British Red Cross, you may see or hear other people's personal information. We want you to treat other people's personal information in the same way you would want yours to be treated. If you do have information about someone you are supporting (e.g. names, contact numbers, addresses and medical information), we ask that you maintain confidentiality and do not discuss or disclose any data or information with anyone outside of British Red Cross or with anyone who doesn't need to know.

Please follow the **helpful tips** below:

**DO** keep any data secure and treat other people's information in the same way you would want yours to be treated

**DO** tell the British Red Cross if you think there has been a data breach so we can manage this.

**DON'T** discuss any information or data with anyone outside of the British Red Cross or with anyone who does not need to know.

**DON'T** leave any messages on answerphones with any personal information if you are not certain who will be able to hear them.

### **With-holding your phone number**

We recommend that you call the isolated person from a withheld number. To withhold your number on individual calls just dial 141 before the telephone number you want to call.

### **Delete service users phone numbers from your mobile**

We request that you immediately delete any service users' contact numbers from your personal mobile device once you no longer need it and do not contact the service user again after you have ceased providing them with a service.

# Safeguarding Essentials

We want to help you understand your role and responsibilities towards safeguarding children and adults who may be at risk of abuse or harm whom you may come across in the course of your volunteering with us. We want you to know how to recognise abuse and know what to do if you come across it.

**What should I do if I am concerned someone has been abused or harmed or is at risk of being abused or harmed?**

- ✓ If there is an immediate risk to a child or adult, call emergency services on 999
- ✓ If you are concerned that a child or adult has been abused or harmed or is at risk of abuse or harm, call the British Red Cross Safeguarding Team on **0300 004 0377** or if it's less urgent, email [safeguarding@redcross.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@redcross.org.uk)

## 1. What is 'abuse'?

Abuse is when someone has been harmed or injured by another person or persons.

## 2. How will I recognise abuse?

If you are aware of the types and signs of abuse or harm, you are more likely to be able to recognise it and take the right action.

### Adults (types and signs of abuse)

Physical abuse	Someone may tell you they have been injured or are in pain but are not able to tell you how this happened.
Emotional and psychological abuse	You may overhear someone being shouted at or being talked about in a disrespectful way.
Sexual abuse	They may tell you directly or share information with you which indicates they are feeling pressured into doing something they don't want to do or tell you about something which could indicate abuse e.g. a urine infection.
Neglect and acts of omission	They may tell you that the person who is supporting them isn't caring for them properly (e.g. not helping them with personal care or making sure they have sufficient food).
Financial and/ or material abuse	Ask them how they are managing their money and whether they are having any problems. Keep an ear out for scammers posing as community support and asking for pin numbers or for pressure from family or friends about wills/finances/possessions.
Discriminatory abuse	Ask if they are being treated fairly. They may tell you they are being talked down to or insulted or treated badly in relation to their age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender reassignment or sexuality.

Organisational abuse (by an organisation)	If someone has regular carers visiting them, they may talk about a lack of flexibility and choice and poor standards of care. It will be difficult to detect this type of abuse as many of these indicators could be covid-19 related.
Domestic abuse	If you speak with the person, anything which indicates they are fearful of their family members. When you call the person, they are never available and always 'sleeping'; you hear a person being shouted at or talked down to.
Modern Slavery	The person you're supporting appears frightened or hesitant to talk with you or they tell you they are moving and won't be there the next week and don't know where they are going or how they'll get there
Self-neglect	The person tells you they aren't eating properly, have stopped taking their medication or are 'letting themselves go'.

## Children

You may hear children in the background, or the adult may disclose direct concerns of harm about children in the household. Listen for concerning language or references to children which could indicate they are not being cared for appropriately or at risk of injury or harm. Children can suffer physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

### 3. What do you need me to do if I think someone might be being abused or at risk of abuse?

- ✓ if you're concerned call the Safeguarding Team on 0300 004 0377.
- ✓ be alert to any indicators of abuse
- ✓ ask open questions when you get safe opportunities to do so.
- ✓ ask the person you're speaking to if they feel safe with the other people who live with them or visit. [If they say no, follow this up with questions to which they can answer yes or not without giving information away to alleged perpetrators who might overhear.]
- ✓ take abuse and the risk of it seriously and act if you are concerned.

#### Please avoid:

- X making assumptions or jumping to conclusions;
- X investigating or asking leading questions; or
- X keeping your concerns to yourself or taking it on as your sole responsibility.

### 4. What abuse or welfare issues might I come across while I am volunteering during this Covid-19 pandemic?

You may come across any of the above, however we are expecting an increase for adults in financial abuse, neglect, domestic abuse (including sexual violence), discriminatory abuse and suicidal thoughts and attempts. We also anticipate an increase across all forms of child abuse.