



Is the United Kingdom body of the worldwide neutral and impartial humanitarian network the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The society was formed in 1870, and is a registered charity with more than 32,500 volunteers and 3,500 staff. At the heart of their work is providing help to people in crisis, both in the UK and overseas. The Red Cross is committed to helping people without discrimination, regardless of their ethnic origin, nationality, political beliefs or religion. Her Majesty The Queen is the patron of the society.

### Guiding Ethos

The mission of the British Red Cross is to mobilise the power of humanity so that individuals and communities can prepare for, deal with and recover from a crisis, summed up by the strapline 'refusing to ignore people in crisis'. In fulfilling this mission, all volunteers and staff must abide by the seven fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which are:

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary Service
- Unity
- Universality

The British Red Cross also has four values, which guide the way they work. These are:

- Compassionate
- Inclusive
- Dynamic
- Courageous

### History

#### Formation

The British Red Cross was formed in 1870, just seven years after the formation of the international movement in Switzerland. This followed the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), and a move across Europe to form similar societies. The society was founded as the 'British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War' at a public meeting chaired by Robert Loyd-Lindsay in London on the 4th of August, 1870. It assisted in providing aid to both warring armies in the Franco-Prussian War and subsequent 19th-century conflicts, under the protection of the Red Cross Emblem. The society was one of several British volunteer medical organisations to serve in the war. In 1905, 35 years after its formation, the society was reconstituted as the British Red Cross Society, and was granted its first Royal Charter in 1908 by King Edward VII. His consort, Queen Alexandra, became its president.

#### First World War

Following the start of the Great War in 1914, the British Red Cross joined forces with the Order of St. John Ambulance to form the Joint War committee and Joint War Organization. They pooled resources and formed Voluntary Aid Detachments (or VADs) with members trained in First Aid, Nursing, Cookery, Hygiene and Sanitation. These detachments all worked under the protection of the Red Cross, working in hospitals, rest stations, work parties and supply centres.

The Joint War Organisation also aided assistance at the front line, supplying the first motorised ambulances to the battlefields, which were significantly more efficient than the horse-drawn ambulances they replaced.

The Joint War Organisation was also active in setting up centres for recording the wounded and missing. Red Cross volunteers searched towns, villages and hospitals where fighting had occurred, noting names of the missing, the injured and the dead. This formed the basis of the international Message and Tracing service, still running today.

Amongst the more innovative activities of the Red Cross in the war was the training of Airedale Terrier dogs to search for wounded soldiers on battlefields.

### Inter-war years

In 1919, after the cessation of hostilities, the League of the Red Cross (now the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies) was formed, and the role of national societies increased, with a shift of emphasis from wartime relief to focusing on "the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and mitigation of suffering throughout the world". The British Red Cross stayed involved with blood transfusion past the formation of the National Blood Service and it retained an ancillary role until 1987.

The British Red Cross was instrumental in starting overseas societies through the Empire and Commonwealth, most of which are now independent national societies. In 1924, the British Red Cross started its youth movement, helping to promote its values to a younger generation.

### Second World War

After the declaration of war in 1939, the British Red Cross once again joined with St. John to form the Joint War Organisation, again affording the St. John volunteers protection under the Red Cross emblem.

The organisation once again worked in hospitals, care home, nurseries, ambulance units, rest stations and more, much of which was funded by the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross and St John appeal, which had raised over £54 million by 1946.

The Red Cross also famously arranged parcels for prisoners of war, following the provisions of the third Geneva convention in 1929, which laid out strict rules for the treatment of PoWs. The Joint War Organisation sent standard food parcels, invalid food parcels, medical supplies, educational books and recreational materials to prisoners of war worldwide. During the conflict, over 20 million standard food parcels were sent.

The only part of the British Isles occupied by Germany, the Channel Islands, were helped avoid starvation with food parcels brought by the Red Cross ship SS Vega.

### Post war years

The immediate priorities for the British Red Cross following the war, were the huge number of displaced civilians caused by forced migration during the war. The Red Cross provided much relief for these people, including basic supplies, and helping to reunite people through the Messaging and Tracing Service. This work led to the provisions in the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention to protect civilians caught up in war.

Since then, the British Red Cross has provided relief to people worldwide, including during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, in Vietnam in 1976, Famine in Africa in the 1980s and the 1999 Armenia, Colombia earthquake. Whilst the society no longer sends its volunteers abroad, it is a leading contributor of delegates to the international red cross pool of emergency relief workers.

Between 1948 and 1967 the British Red Cross and the St Andrew's Ambulance Association jointly operated the Scottish Ambulance Service, under contract to the National Health Service. NHS Scotland took over full responsibility for the service in 1974.

In the UK, the society has been active at many major disasters, from the coal tip slide at Aberfan in 1966, the Lockerbie air disaster in 1988 to the London bombings in 2005, providing support on all levels, from front line medical provision, to running helplines for worried relatives and long term emotional care for the victims.

In July 2008, the society celebrated the 100th anniversary of the granting of the Royal Charter with a garden party at Buckingham Palace. The party was hosted by TRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

### Status and Structure

The British Red Cross is recognised by the UK Government as one of three Voluntary Aid Societies, the other two being St John Ambulance and St Andrew's Ambulance Association. It is the sole Red Cross Society for the United Kingdom and the British Overseas Territories. The organisation is divided into three regions, then into operational areas, and then further into 'branches', which in most cases represent an administrative county. Services provided by the British Red Cross are thus able to be adapted, depending on the circumstances and needs of the local area.

### Overseas Branches

British Virgin Islands Red Cross  
Cayman Islands Red Cross  
Turks and Caicos Islands Red Cross  
Montserrat Red Cross  
Anguilla Red Cross  
Bermuda Red Cross  
Falkland Islands Red Cross  
Gibraltar Red Cross

### Activities

The British Red Cross, as with all IFRC member societies, operate first and foremost an Emergency Response service, which supports the statutory and governmental emergency services in times of crisis, in accordance with the duty of Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies to be auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments.

The British Red Cross provides a wide range of services to assist the emergency services and statutory authorities, ranging from first aid support and distribution of aid during a crisis to managing a disaster appeal scheme and providing telephone support lines in its aftermath. Notably, all services of the British Red Cross can be utilised for the emergency response service, as the situation demands. For example, the therapeutic care service can provide support at a rest centre for survivors, while Ambulances can assist the NHS in caring for the injured.

The emergency response service has been present at most types of major emergency such as the London bombings, Manchester Arena bombing, Grenfell Tower fire, rail crashes, other fires, and floods. The British Red Cross operate this service throughout its territory, available 24 hours a day but, contrary to popular belief, does not send its volunteers abroad, as overseas disasters will be dealt with by the society in the country affected.

In addition to this core service, the British Red Cross operates in other areas, both at home and abroad as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to help people in crisis:

### First aid and ambulance provision

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest provider of first aid in the world. The British Red Cross is possibly most recognised in the UK for its work as a leading provider of first aid at public events across the UK. Thousands of volunteers give care to the injured at events of all sizes including Premiership football games, concerts and large-scale running events such as the Great North Run.

The training undertaken by Event First Aid Service volunteers varies, and advanced training is available to those volunteers who wish to undertake it, which includes rising to the level of Ambulance Crew, or even undertaking training to become a fully qualified Ambulance technician. The British Red Cross employ Paramedics but do not train them in-house. These ambulance crews undergo national standard training and examination and are then qualified to offer an advanced level of care to sick and injured patients. The training is of a sufficiently high standard, that in many areas, along with the other main medical service provider, St. John Ambulance, British Red Cross ambulance crews work on behalf of the NHS Ambulance Service during particularly busy times or whenever requested, responding to 999 calls from members of the public. Areas with regular British Red Cross ambulance support include the North East Ambulance Service<sup>[8]</sup> and the South East Coast Ambulance Service.

Specialist units exist within the first aid provision including the Cycle Response Unit, which allows trained cyclists with enhanced first aid skills to access areas inaccessible to full ambulance vehicles. This was initially sponsored by Land Rover.

In October 2019 the British Red Cross announced to volunteers that it would cease providing Event First Aid services on 31st December 2019, much to the dismay of its dedicated volunteer workforce. Its Ambulance Support services continue.

### First aid training

The British Red Cross is one of the leading providers of first aid training in the United Kingdom. It trains people both on a community and commercial basis. The commercial training teams run nationally recognised First aid courses specifically designed to provide skills for use at work. The British Red Cross have been running these courses for 25 years and over 120,000 people are trained each year. Courses range from a basic Emergency Life Support to a three-day First Aid at Work (FAW) course recognised by the Health and Safety Executive.

On a community basis, the British Red Cross also is well known as providing many first aid courses across the country to members of the public, as well as reaching out to schools, community groups and minority groups. One of the projects of the British Red Cross is *Everyday First Aid*, which seeks to provide training to those who would not otherwise get the opportunity to undertake such training, such as people with disabilities.

First aid training programmes delivered by the Red Cross are renowned for giving participants both the skills and confidence to use what they have learnt, with a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical sessions.

### Fire and emergency support

Formerly known as Fire Victim Support, this service is one of the more recent to be started by the British Red Cross. Covering most, but not yet all, of the UK, the British Red Cross provide assistance at the request of the local Fire and Rescue Service to those in the immediate aftermath of emergencies such as a house fire or road traffic accident. Typically a team of two volunteers with a customised vehicle will respond to victims and provide them with shelter, food, first aid, clothing, toiletries, washing facilities and moral support. Volunteers will assist with the process of dealing with local authority housing departments or insurance companies to enable rehousing.

In addition, these teams are frequently called out to major incidents to provide support to the firefighters and other emergency services, from simply making refreshments available, to providing a confidential listening service for those members of the emergency services traumatised by what they have just seen.

They also are key in many Local Authorities' emergency plans and may be given the role of helping at or running Survivor reception centres, setting up Friends and Family reception centres and providing first aid at them, and sometimes the providing first aid at the incident site (such as during the London bombings on 7/7) – thus freeing up more highly trained Paramedics. The Red Cross also are able to set up a number of help lines in connection with major incidents.

### Medical equipment loan

British Red Cross provides the public alongside some Hospital trusts to borrow a wheelchair for free. This operates throughout United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. They nearly have 1,000 different offices that operate this service. This service is operated by the British Red Cross Health and Social Department.

### Humanitarian education

This service provides a way of learning about and understanding the world – best thought of as a form of citizenship education. It is not religious or political, but is centrally concerned with our shared humanity. At the core of humanitarian action and thinking is a desire to contribute to saving lives and reducing suffering. Humanitarian education invites exploration of those actions and thoughts. Humanitarian Education helps students examine what motivates people, including themselves, and extends to other societies, times and cultures. It explores the wider issues, sometimes surprisingly complex, that arise when people help each other.

The British Red Cross provides educational resources for teachers and trained peer education volunteers. In September 2008 the British Red Cross launched an alternate reality game called Traces of Hope to help educate people about the work the Red Cross does in conflict areas and the effect war has on civilians.

### Health and social care

#### Care in the home

The British Red Cross, in some areas, provides short-term care and support for people recently returned from hospital, or recently having suffered an injury which otherwise would result in a hospital or care facility admission. Volunteers enter peoples' homes and help them with the every day tasks which would otherwise be impossible or pose difficulty for them, such as shopping and getting prescriptions, helping them maintain their independence and dignity, while preparing them for living independently and offering companionship.

There is small Red Cross team working in the discharge lounge in A&E at Leighton Hospital who use their own cars to drive vulnerable patients home and settle them in. The following day they make a follow up – a phone call. If all is well, great. If not, they can refer on to the BRC's Home from Hospital scheme that provides up to six weeks social support such as help with shopping and befriending. This is one of 26 similar services. There are 86 Home from Hospital services.

While referrals for this service can come from health and social care professionals, people can also self-refer.

### Therapeutic care

British Red Cross volunteers in the Therapeutic Care Service are also active in hospitals and other care settings, such as care homes, where they enter and give patients a therapeutic massage of the head, neck, shoulders and hands through the patient's clothing, to help relax them, particularly at stressful times, and encourage a sense of wellbeing. Referrals for this service usually come from

healthcare professionals, but people can self-refer, as the service can also be provided at community meeting places and homes.

### Crisis intervention community support service

The Crisis intervention community support service which operates in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Cheshire provides crisis emotional support and assists people in maintaining their independent living skills during a period of crisis. It helps to prevent admission to hospital or respite care by providing short, targeted interventions. The team in Nottingham team consists of 12 healthcare assistants. During 2014 it claimed that 748 admissions were avoided, which would have cost about £1.5m. The service costs the two local Clinical Commissioning Groups just under £250,000 a year to run.

### Transport service

The British Red Cross provides a number of transport schemes to get people with limited access to transport, either with their own car or public transport, from place to place. Services can be provided by car or minibus, with an escort if appropriate, in order to help people lead a normal life, such as journeys for medical appointments and to shops. This includes in some areas 'Dial-a-Ride' schemes, where elderly or disabled people can phone and are transported by specially adapted minibus door to door.

In addition, the British Red Cross also provides, in some areas, ambulance transport, either seated or stretcher, between places of treatment, or for admissions and discharges of patients at hospital. This is operated by the trained ambulance crews also used for emergency ambulance provision. In 2008 as part of their 60th Anniversary celebration land rover donated 60 frelander vehicles to the British Red Cross for use in the UK and around the world.

### Refugee support services

Since 1989, the British Red Cross has provided a range of services to refugees, including managing a number of refugee reception centres nationwide. The work includes providing refugee orientation services and ensuring that life essentials, such as shelter and food are provided for. In cases of destitution, the British Red Cross can provide short-term emergency help, and advice on accessing other services. A peer befriending service also exists to provide help to vulnerable refugees, such as young people and women. The British Red Cross can also assist in cases of large-scale arrivals to the United Kingdom.

As of September 2008 the British Red Cross is a member of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

### International family tracing

This is another specialised international service, operated by the majority of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide. Started to help the refugees of war, this service now extends to any person, who has lost touch with family through war or disaster. The global Red Cross and Red Crescent network uses local volunteers to find relations, put them back in touch, or simply pass messages.

The British Red Cross also provides this service to those separated by the Second World War. This aspect hit the headlines when a volunteer famous for doing this work for 20 years was dismissed.

### International disaster relief

Since the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is worldwide, there are volunteers in the nation affected that can provide help in disaster situations. However, the British Red Cross, in common with other national societies, sends paid personnel abroad, called *delegates*, who have specialised skills such as in logistics, to assist the agencies in the aftermath of a major international

disaster. This is in addition to resources the British Red Cross can provide, in co-operation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The British Red Cross also provides assistance in recovery after the immediate post-disaster situation, helping prepare communities for future emergencies and facilitating long-term development. As the largest charity of its type, it is also part of the UK Disasters Emergency Committee, which is a group of large charities who fund raise for major disasters, such as the Boxing day tsunami

### Health and care abroad

The British Red Cross works closely with other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to improve the health and care situation of vulnerable communities abroad.

The British Red Cross has been supporting HIV work internationally since the mid-1980s, for example in China, South Africa and Ethiopia. The charity helps combat Tuberculosis in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, including supporting programmes involved in raising awareness and supporting those affected in their homes. Furthermore, it supports water and sanitation activities in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Cambodia, by providing safer drinking water and sanitation facilities and educating populations. The British Red Cross also supports programmes assisting healthcare in conflict areas, such as Iraq and Sudan.

### HIV awareness

The British Red Cross supports the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's mission to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS worldwide. The society works with groups of young people to fight discrimination and stigma as well as reducing complacency about catching the disease. On World AIDS Day (1 December) 2007, the society launched an on-line campaign called "HIV: What's the story?" to target young people in the UK and overseas. The campaign also makes extensive use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo.

### Example of annual activity

In 2010 the British Red Cross carried out the following activities:

- provided water, food and shelter for over 420,000 people affected by 25 overseas disasters
- trained 221,970 people in first aid (in the UK)
- provided first aid services at 9,533 public events
- responded to 2,102 emergencies in the UK
- helped 7,109 victims of fire

### Fundraising

As a charity, the British Red Cross relies heavily on voluntary contributions from members of the public and organisations, in order to carry out its work. In addition, it does also make money from its commercial services, including First Aid Training (for the workplace), First aid provision at events and providing auxiliary crews to the ambulance services.

Whilst personal donations are important, the scale of corporate donations can make a huge difference to the society, and initiatives such as being the Tesco charity of the year in 2007 make large contributions to central funds.

Every year, many events are held, including sponsored bike rides, walks and even skydives. Red Cross Appeal Week (formerly known as Red Cross Flag Week), is held annually in May, to coincide with the birthday of Red Cross founder, Henry Dunant. This is a week where staff and volunteers are asked to donate two hours to run street and private premises collections.

The British Red Cross helps to fund, and is aided with funds raised by, the national will-making scheme Will aid, in which participating solicitors waive their usual fee to write a basic will and in exchange invite the client to donate to charity.

### Celebrity links

To help boost support for the cause, the Red Cross has a number of celebrity ambassadors which include Angela Rippon, Michael Buerk, James McAvoy, David Bull, Josie d'Arby, Nancy Dell'Olio, Konnie Huq, Craig Gannon and Dougray Scott.

### British Red Cross Museum

The British Red Cross runs a museum containing a variety of materials from its beginnings in 1870 to the present day. This museum is a member of The London Museums of Health & Medicine group.<sup>[24]</sup> The collections include posters, photographs, badges worn by Society members, medals awarded to Society members, medical equipment and fundraising materials.

The collections can only be visited via a guided tour. Tours of the museum and archive collections must be booked in advance.

### Controversies

The British Red Cross sent a warning letter to the developers of the indie game 'Prison Architect' in 2016. The organisation claims that, by using red cross images on 'Prison Architect' ambulances and paramedics, the game has violated the Geneva Conventions.

### The Voluntary Medical Services Medal



The Voluntary Medical Service Medal is a medal awarded by the British Red Cross and St Andrew's First Aid. It was instituted in 1932 at the direction of George V.

To qualify for the medal, a member must accrue fifteen years' continuous efficient service as a first aid volunteer in either the Red Cross or St Andrew's providing a minimum of ten hours field service per year. Service for the medal was retrospective to the creation of Voluntary Aid Detachments in 1909.

The medal is 36 millimetres (1.4 inches) in diameter and was designed by Percy Metcalfe. The obverse bears a symbolic representation of Florence Nightingale carrying a lamp. The reverse features a design of both the Geneva and St Andrew's crosses to denote the two qualifying organisations.

Between the upper arms of the St Andrew's Cross is the text LONG AND EFFICIENT SERVICE. The medal was originally made of silver, later of silver plated copper, and since the 1960's of copper-nickel. It is suspended from a straight swivel bar and hangs from a ribbon of red with yellow stripes at the edges and a thin white stripe in the centre.

Second award clasp for service with the Red Cross, on the suspension ribbon of the medal, are embellished with the Geneva cross for Red Cross service or the St Andrew's cross for St Andrews First Aid service are worn to denote five additional years of qualifying service. In undress uniform, on the ribbon of the medal, one silver Geneva or St Andrew's cross emblem is added to the medal ribbon for five additional years of service. At twenty years of additional service the silver emblems are replaced by a silver-gilt emblem. Up to four silver-gilt emblems can replace the silver type to denote 25, 30, and 35 years of service in the applicable voluntary organisation.